ISLAMIC GUIDE TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

MUHAMMAD IBN ADAM AL-KAWTHARI



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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

FOREWORD

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. All praise is for Allah Most High, Lord of the worlds. And may peace and blessings be upon His beloved Messenger Muḥammad, a Mercy to the worlds, and upon his entire family, his Companions and the righteous ones who follow in their footsteps until the Day of Judgment.

In answering questions from the public over the past five years or so, I have come across many individuals who desire to know the Islamic ruling on matters of sexual intimacy between spouses. Aided by the relative anonymity of email as a medium of communication, questioners have opened up and began to pose frank questions courageously without being shy and without the fear of being humiliated.

The prevalence and variety of these questions led me to keep records of them, and it quickly became evident that many Muslims are unaware of the Islamic laws and etiquettes pertaining to sexual relations. Many desire to live their conjugal lives in harmony with Islamic teachings and have a genuine inclination to learn, but are prevented by the embarrassment of asking a scholar directly. I realised that there is real need for a comprehensive work on the subject if Muslims are to live their lives in conformity with the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunna. Owing to this great need, and the significance of the issue for married couples, I began preparing a detailed and comprehensive work – often referring to the notes taken of the questions posed to me – the result of which is in your hands, *Al-ḥamdulillāh*.

This book approaches the issue of sexual relations head on to apprise married couples of the teachings of Allah Most High and His beloved Messenger ﷺ on this subject, allowing them to enjoy their union while receiving divine reward in doing so. What are the correct intentions behind sexual relations? What are couples allowed to do and what must

they avoid? How does one prepare for sexual relations? What are the rules and etiquettes of foreplay, sex itself and the moments after sex? What is the ideal way of spending the first night of marriage? These are just a few of the questions answered in this book. In addition, many modern issues such as bondage, cross-dressing, using sex aids, watching pornography, oral sex and phone sex will be discussed exhaustively in light of the teachings of the Qur'ān, Sunna, reference works from the four Sunni Schools of Islamic law, and other works of classical and contemporary scholars.

It begins with an introduction outlining the importance of the subject at hand and my approach to it. Thereafter, the book is divided into various chapters that take an aspect of sexual behaviour and explore it in some depth. To further the benefit of the book, references for all the quotes have been provided, citing volume, page or hadith numbers. Similarly, notes explaining key terms and concepts have been included wherever necessary. The book ends with a conclusion, a detailed bibliography and an index of terminologies used and personalities quoted.

I thank Allah Most High for giving me the ability and strength to prepare this work. I am grateful to my parents, teachers, family and friends, all of whom, although they had no hand in any of the actual stages of producing this work, without their love, support and prayers for me, I am doubtful whether I would be able to compile this work. May Allah reward them accordingly, Ameen.

I am grateful to Shaykh Muftī Zubair Bayat (may Allah preserve him) of Durban, South Africa, who, despite his extremely busy schedule, spared time to review the entire manuscript, and provided important corrections and suggestions. May Allah reward him, give him Baraka in his time, and bless him in this world and the next. I am also indebted to brother Yahya at Turath Publications, whose constant encouragement and resolve kept me on my toes. May Allah accept his efforts in his desire and pursuit to produce high quality Islamic works, Ameen.

I also extend my appreciation to anyone else who may have helped me in any way. The absence of their names here in no way undermines their contribution. Their reward is with Allah, and His reward surpasses any gratitude that I may offer: "Indeed, what is with Allah is better for you, if only you were to know." (Qur'ān 16:95)

I have tried my utmost best to clarify and systematically explain matters concerning the sexual relationship of a husband and wife. If I have done some good, it is from Allah Most High, and if I have erred, then it is from me and the whisperings of Satan. I pray, and I ask the

readers to pray, that Allah forgive me and overlook my shortcomings, and make this work purely for His sake, Ameen.

And the last of our prayers is, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds."

Muḥammad ibn Adam al-Kawtharī
Darul Iftaa, Leicester, UK
January 14, 2008 CE / Muharram 7, 1429 AH

PREFACE BY MUFTĪ ZUBAIR BAYAT

I congratulate the author, Muftī Muḥammad ibn Ādam (ḥafiẓahullāh), for this excellent work on a rather sensitive but much required subject. The author, a young, dynamic and promising Islamic scholar, has put tremendous effort into conducting meticulous research in preparation of this book, which is well annotated with references and footnotes.

Some years ago, having noticed a need for good, authentic material on the subject in the English language, I penned a consise work titled, "Etiquettes of sexual relations", which has gone through dozens of prints to date, Al-ḥamdulillāh.

Now, Muftī Muḥammad has in a very lucid and clear manner, prepared a detailed work on the subject. It covers many contemporary issues, including current sexual practices, and the Islamic rulings on them. I have had the opportunity to review this work, and to offer suggestions, which the author graciously accepted.

I have found this work to be beneficial and highly informative, and strongly recommend any prospective couple, and indeed any couple, to study this book.

May the Almighty crown his efforts with success and acceptance and may he continue to serve the Ummah with his scholastic abilities.

Muftī Zubair Bayat
Director: Darul Ihsan Centre
Durban, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

THE COMPLETENESS OF ISLAM is displayed in the guidance it provides for every aspect of life, from purity and prayer, to trade regulations, marriage and inheritance laws. There is little place for the separation of religion from the state, rather, Islam insists on adherence to the full spectrum of its teachings – from the fundamental articles of faith (*ʿaqā'id*) and devotional worship (*ʿibadāt*), to financial transactions (*muʿāmalāt*), social and communal etiquettes (*muʿāshara*) and moral ethics (*akhlāq*).

Allah Most High says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ادْخُلُواْ فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

"O you who believe, enter into Islam completely, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is an open enemy for you." (Qur'ān 2:208)

It is a common fallacy that Islam is restricted to particular forms of devotional worship, and has nothing to say about social issues, marriage, divorce, politics, economics and so on. A cursory study of the Sharīʿa reveals that a great portion of Islamic law exists to address these very questions. Compilations of Prophetic narrations and manuals of Islamic law (*fiqh*) have substantial chapters dedicated to these subjects. Of the four volumes of the renowned classical Ḥanafī fiqh Manual, *Al-Hidāya*, only the first explains the rules of devotional worship; the other three are dedicated to laws on trade, marriage, divorce, penal law, dietary laws, inheritance and other issues. The same pattern is found in many ḥadīth collections where the majority of the work consists of matters other than the pure devotional worship.

The implication of this is that a Muslim who confines his practice of Islam to purely devotional worship is omitting a great portion of the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunna. Muslims are therefore duty bound to learn the full spectrum of Islamic teachings and implement them, and the fruit of this is a blissful, peaceful and successful life in this world and the next.

The beloved Messenger ﷺ is a light that shows the way to that which is of benefit in both worlds, and is the exemplar of perfection, even for the mundane realities of everyday life. Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him) relates in his *Saḥīḥ* from the Companion Salmān al-Farisi ؓ that some polytheists approached him saying:

قَدْ عَلَّمَكُمْ نَبِيُّكُمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى الْخِرَاءَةَ

"Your Prophet has taught you everything, even about excrement [i.e. etiquettes of relieving oneself]." He replied:

أَجَلْ ، لَقَدْ نَهَانَا صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ نَسْتَقْبِلَ الْقِبْلَةَ بِغَائِطٍ أَوْ بَوْلٍ ، وَأَنْ لَا نَسْتَنْجِيَ بِالْيَمِينِ ، وَأَنْ لَا يَسْتَنْجِيَ أَحَدُنَا بِأَقَلَّ مِنْ ثَلَاثَةِ أَحْجَارٍ ، أَوْ نَسْتَنْجِيَ بِرَجِيعٍ أَوْ عَظْمٍ

"Indeed! He has forbidden us from facing the *Qibla* when excreting or urinating, and from cleaning ourselves with our right hand, and from cleaning ourselves with less than three stones, and from cleaning ourselves with dung or bone." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 262 & *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 7, the wording is of *Abū Dāwūd*)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ أُعَلِّمُكُمْ ، فَإِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمُ الْغَائِطَ فَلَا يَسْتَقْبِلِ الْقِبْلَةَ وَلَا يَسْتَدْبِرْهَا وَلَا يَسْتَطِبْ بِيَمِينِهِ

"Verily, I am to you like a father, I teach you [i.e. do not be ashamed in learning even the basics from me]. If any one of you goes to relieve himself, he must not face the *Qibla* nor turn his back toward it, and must not clean himself with his right hand..." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 8)

Accordingly, Islam does not neglect one of the most private moments in an individual's life, namely, the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. Detailed and explicit rulings regarding sexual behaviour can be found in the Qur'an, Sunna and works of classical scholars. It is common to find scholars dedicating whole chapters to this delicate, yet important, subject. Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Imam Ibn Qudāma's *Al-Mughnī*, Imam Nasā'ī's *Ishrat al-Nisā'*, Imam Abu 'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī's *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir*, the *Ghunya al-Ṭālibīn* by Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and countless other classical works deal with this topic in some detail. The major reference works in all four *Sunni* Schools of Islamic law (*madhhabs*) also discuss many aspects of sexual relations and what married couples may and may not do.

A healthy sexual relationship is absolutely vital in marriage. Scholars today generally agree that one of the primary reasons for failed marriages is failed sexual lives. The root cause of marital discord is often sexual dissatisfaction, with problems in the bedroom often leading to unhappiness, frustration, and, at times, even divorce.

Among the objectives of marriage is to satisfy one's sexual needs in a lawful manner, and if either spouse is unfulfilled, the temptation to look elsewhere can become overwhelming. Often, a spouse will refuse to engage in a form of sexual activity, mistakenly believing it to be unlawful, which could easily sour their relationship. It is therefore of key importance for married couples to understand the teachings of Islam regarding sexual behaviour. With some basic education on the subject, it is possible to have a healthy sexual life and avoid marital conflict.

A second, but no less important, reason for a detailed exposition of this subject is the modern world's fixation with sexuality. The topic has been institutionalised in the school curriculum under the banner of "sex education", where children are taught what some may consider shameful and sordid acts. Furthermore, the increasing pervasiveness of sexual imagery is affecting Muslims, with growing numbers becoming addicted to pornography and other unlawful means of sexual gratification.

In this environment, it is crucial to present the Islamic stance on this subject, otherwise Muslims will be left to learn about it from un-Islamic resources, damaging their character, spirituality and physical health.

Some may consider any discussion on sex to be offensive and a breach of religious propriety (*adab*) and modesty (*ḥayā'*), unaware that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself explained this subject in considerable

detail. Several hadīths describe how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught men and women matters relating to sex, many of which will be explored over the course of this book.

Imam Bukhārī and Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on them) both record a hadīth in their *Sahīh* collections, related by Abū Hurayra ؓ in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was teaching his Companions ؓ the rules of having a ritual bath (*ghusl*), when he said:

إذا جلس بين شعبها الأربع ، ثم جهدها ، فقد وجب عليه الغسل

"When a man sits amidst her four parts and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath becomes obligatory upon him." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 287 & *Sahīh Muslim* 348, the wording is of *Muslim*)

In this hadīth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ describes explicitly how a man might have sex with his wife such that it necessitates a ritual bath of purification. There are numerous other examples which illustrate the frankness with which the Prophet ﷺ discussed these matters.

The Companions ؓ also did not shy away from asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ questions of a sexual nature. In a famous incident, Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb ؓ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about the permissibility of penetrating one's wife from behind i.e. penetrating the vagina, and not the anus. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not rebuke him for asking an "offensive" question, but waited until Allah Most High Himself revealed verses of the Qur'ān to answer his question. (See: *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2980)

Remarkably, women also felt able to ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ questions of a sexual nature without any reluctance or being ashamed of such enquiry. Rather, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not shy away from answering them, even though he was shy by nature.

Umm Salama ؓ relates:

جاءت أم سليم إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالت : يا رسول الله ، إن الله لا يستحيي من الحق ، فهل على المرأة من غسل إذا احتلمت؟ قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: إذا رأت الماء ، فغطت أم سلمة تعني وجهها وقالت: يا رسول الله ، وتحتلم المرأة؟ قال: نعم تربت يمينك ، فبم يشبهها ولدها؟

"Umm Sulaym رضي الله عنها came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Surely, Allah is not shy of the truth. Is it necessary for a woman to take a ritual bath after she has a wet dream?' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, 'Yes, if she notices a discharge.' Umm Salama covered her face and asked, 'O Messenger of Allah! Does a woman have a discharge?' He replied, 'Yes, let your right hand be in dust [an Arabic expression said light-heartedly to someone whose statement you contradict], how does the son resemble his mother?'" (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 130)

Here, a woman has no qualms in asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about something as intimate as a wet dream. Umm Sulaym's statement "Allah is not shy of the truth" is a clear indication that there is no shyness when it comes to learning about matters of *Dīn*. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used this phrase himself when he prohibited anal sex, saying:

إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ، لَا تَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي أَدْبَارِهِنَّ

"Allah is not shy of the truth; do not enter women in their anuses." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1924, *Musnad Aḥmad* & others)

It is clear, then, that there is nothing wrong in discussing this subject for instructional purposes, as long as it is done with decency. In fact, it is a mistake to shy away from the teachings of Allah Most High and the Messenger ﷺ, even those regarding sexual matters.

Imam Bukhārī relates from Mujāhid who said, "Sacred knowledge (*ʿilm*) is not gained by a shy person nor an arrogant one." (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:60)

Likewise, he relates from Sayyida ʿA'isha رضي الله عنها who said, "How praiseworthy are the women of *Anṣār*; shyness does not prevent them from having a deep understanding of religion." (Ibid)

Modesty is, without doubt, a fundamental element of our religion, but when it comes to religious matters it should not prevent one from learning. In the modern world, questions of sexuality are openly discussed, often indecently; why then should we feel ashamed of learning the pure and decent teachings of Islam on this subject?

Those who feel that the contents of this book are overly explicit should keep in mind the words of Allah Most High, His Messenger ﷺ and the Companions رضي الله عنهم, "Surely, Allah is not shy of [expounding] the truth" (Qur'ān 33:53, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 130 and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1924). Whatever is discussed in this book is based directly on the Qur'ān,

Sunna, sayings of the Companions ﷺ, works of classical scholars, reference works in each of the four *Sunnī* Schools of Islamic law, and authentic works of some learned contemporary scholars.

In light of the two reasons discussed above, namely, sexual problems between married couples as a cause of marital discord, and the modern-day fixation on sex and its powerful influence on Muslims, the need to guide Muslims to the Islamic teachings regarding sexual matters is clear.

A third reason is that many Muslims simply do not know the Islamic laws and etiquettes on sexual relations; some are even unaware that sex during menstruation is categorically forbidden. There are also many who desire to live their lives in harmony with Islamic teachings and are motivated to learn, but feel too embarrassed to ask a scholar directly. For such individuals, this book will prove to be an invaluable resource, *In shā' Allāh.*

Finally, some Muslim couples may be engaging in practices that are completely permitted, but are under the false impression that they are prohibitively disliked or forbidden. I once came across an individual who believed that kissing his wife's body was unlawful, but he did it nevertheless. Even though he had not committed a sin, it was detrimental to his spirituality to practise an act he believed to be unlawful, despite it being perfectly lawful. People in this situation must be apprised of what is permitted, preventing them from feeling guilty for engaging in it. More seriously, performing acts that one believes are unlawful, even if they are completely lawful, will eventually instil a lax attitude towards Islamic law in the heart, and this will inevitably lead to acts that are actually unlawful. Clear guidelines, therefore, are absolutely necessary to inform Muslims of what is permitted and to safeguard them from falling into prohibited acts.

- 1 -

INTENTIONS AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

INTENTION (*niyya*) is the fundamental element that elevates mundane acts into acts of great virtue, drawing immense rewards. Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

إِنَّمَا الأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى...

"Actions are but by intentions, and one shall only have that which one intends..." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1)

Imam Ibn Nujaym (may Allah have mercy on him) mentions a well-known juristic maxim (*qa'ida fiqhiyya*) which states: "There is no reward without intention." (*Al-Ashbāh wa 'l-Naẓā'ir* P: 19)

Imam 'Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (may Allah have mercy on him) says: "How often a paltry act becomes great by its intention, and how often a great act becomes paltry by its intention." (*Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'* 8: 400)

As such, forming the correct intention for everything that one does is of paramount importance. For one's acts to be consonant with the Sunna of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ and to win unto the pleasure of Allah Most High, one must form an intention for Allah. Otherwise, it remains but a routine habit.

Sexual relations with one's spouse are not excluded from this principle, in that they should be performed with transformative intentions and objectives (*maqāṣid*) in mind, namely:

1) Increasing the nation (*umma*) of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and seeking pious offspring who will serve Islam.

Allah Most High says:

فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

"So now have relations with them [your wives] and seek what Allah has ordained for you." (Qur'ān 2:187)

The great exegete (*mufassir*) of the Qur'ān Imam Ibn Kathīr (may Allah have mercy on him) quotes from many Companions (*saḥāba*), their followers (*tabi'ūn*), and other classical exegetes (*mufassirūn*), such as Abū Hurayra, 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās, Anas, Mujāhid, Ikrima, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr that the words of Allah Most High "and seek" refers to having children. (*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm* 1:300)

The great nineteenth century scholar of Qur'ānic exegesis and Prophetic narrations in the Indian Subcontinent, Shaykh Shabbīr Ahmad Uthmānī, writes in his renowned Urdu exegesis of the Qur'ān, "You should seek the children ordained for you in the heavenly book (*Al-lawh al-maḥfuẓ*) through sexual intercourse with your women. Mere satisfaction of lust and sexual desire should not be the aim." (*Tafsīr-e-Uthmānī* 1:130)

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

النِّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِي فَمَنْ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ بِسُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي ، وَتَزَوَّجُوا فَإِنِّي مُكَاثِرٌ بِكُمُ الْأُمَمَ

"Marriage is from my way (*sunna*). And whoever does not practice my way [out of rejection] is not from me. And marry [and procreate], for indeed I will outnumber the other nations by you..." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1846)

It is evident from these texts that procreation and seeking of pious offspring are valid objectives of sexual relations with one's spouse. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ encouraged his followers to marry in order to seek what Allah provides through the beautiful union of a man and woman.

2) Protection against fornication and other corrupting activities, such as masturbation, looking at pornographic material, and casting lustful gazes at the opposite gender.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to us:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ ، مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ فَإِنَّهُ أَغَضُّ لِلْبَصَرِ وَأَحْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وِجَاءٌ

"O group of young men, anyone [of you] who can afford it should marry, for it lowers the eyes and guards the private parts. Anyone who is unable to marry should fast, for it restrains the appetite." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4779)

Sayyiduna Jābir ﷺ relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

إِذَا أَحَدُكُمْ أَعْجَبَتْهُ الْمَرْأَةُ فَوَقَعَتْ فِي قَلْبِهِ فَلْيَعْمِدْ إِلَى امْرَأَتِهِ فَلْيُوَاقِعْهَا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ يَرُدُّ مَا فِي نَفْسِهِ

"When a woman attracts anyone of you and she captivates his heart, then he should go to his wife and have sex with her, for it would repel that what he feels [i.e. sexual desire]." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1403)

One of the basic objectives of sexual relations with one's spouse, therefore, is chastity and to satisfy one's sexual needs lawfully so that one can refrain from unlawful acts.

3) Fulfilling the right of one's spouse in a lawful manner, as it is the responsibility of each spouse to satisfy the sexual needs of the other, as will be discussed in more detail later on, by the Will of Allah.

4) Removing fluids from the body, which would otherwise leave one susceptible to illness and poor health. (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* 178) [1]

5) Enjoying this great gift that the All-Merciful has given to mankind. There is nothing wrong in intending enjoyment and sexual gratification

1 Note that all medical statements quoted in this book are derived from the books of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars; some of whom would have had their medical training from Greek-influenced medicine, hence their medical opinions and understanding of the body may be taken from Greek medicine, rather than Prophetic medicine. And whilst Prophetic medicine can, of course, never be disproved or denied, there are aspects to Greek medicine which have been. As such, medical opinions in this book may differ from the findings and approach of modern Western medicine, and some of which might not today be wholly accurate. The reader is advised to keep this in mind whilst reading the book.

when engaging in sexual relations with one's spouse. Sex is not a dirty act, but rather something that has been practised by countless Prophets and pious servants of Allah Most High. As such, lawfully enjoying this act does not conflict with modesty or good character in any way.

Sex at times is perceived of as unclean, and as something that should only be practised as a need, like the need to relieve oneself. People holding this misconception perform sex reluctantly, and consider any enjoyment derived from it as disrespectful or immoral. They have completely missed the point. Lawful sex is an act of worship, and should be enjoyed as much as possible.

SEX IS A FORM OF CHARITY (ṢADAQA)

The correct intentions mentioned above elevate sex from an act of physical pleasure into an act of immense reward and a form of charity. Sayyiduna Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إنّ بكلّ تسبيحة صدقة ، وكلّ تكبيرة صدقة ، وكلّ تحميدة صدقة ، وكلّ تهليلة صدقة
، وأمرٌ بالمعروف صدقة ، ونهيٌ عن منكرٍ صدقة ، وفي بضع أحدكم صدقة ، يا
رسول الله ، أيأتي أحدنا شهوته ويكون له فيها أجر؟ قال: أرأيتم لو وضعها في حرام
أكان عليه فيها وزر؟ فكذلك إذا وضعها في الحلال كان له أجرا

"...Verily in every *Tasbīḥ* [i.e. saying *Subḥan Allāh*] there is charity, in every *Takbīr* [i.e. saying *Allāhu Akbar*] there is charity, in every *Taḥmīd* [i.e. saying *Al-ḥamdulillāh*] there is charity, in every *Tahlīl* [i.e. saying *Lā ilāha illallāh*] there is charity, enjoining of good is charity, forbidding of evil is charity, and in the sexual act of each of you there is charity." [The Companions said], "O Messenger of Allah! One of us fulfils his sexual desire and he is given a reward for that?" And he said, "Do you not see that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded." (*Saḥīh Muslim* 1006)

Imam Nawawī (may Allah have mercy on him), the great ḥadīth expert (*muḥaddith*) and Shāfi'ī jurist (*faqīh*), comments on this ḥadīth in his monumental commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: "In this ḥadīth there is an indication that through correct intentions, the merely permissible becomes an act of worship. As such, sex becomes an act of worship if

one intends by it to fulfil the right of the wife and treat her honourably as Allah Most High has commanded, or to seek pious offspring, keep oneself chaste or one's wife chaste, or to protect both spouses from looking at the unlawful, thinking about it and desiring it, or other praiseworthy goals." (*Al-Minhaj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj* 778)

It is clear from this that even at the peak of passion, one does not forget one's Lord. One should remember the many lofty aims beyond sexual gratification that can be sought through sexual relations with one's spouse. By these means, this beautiful, gratifying and enjoyable act is elevated into an act of worship and charity.

Imam Ibn al-Jawzī (may Allah have mercy on him) states: "At times, sex results in producing offspring like unto the calibre of Imam Shāfi'ī and Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allah have mercy on them). Sex of this nature is superior to one thousand years of [voluntary] worship!" (*Talbīs Iblīs* 358)

- 2 -

SEX AS A RIGHT OF BOTH SPOUSES

ISLAM PROTECTS THE sexual rights of both the husband and wife, and to satisfy the sexual appetite of one's spouse is a legitimate objective of sexual relations and even of marriage itself.

The right to sexual fulfilment belongs to both husband and wife, and it is a mistake to assume that only the husband has this privilege. The wife has as much right to expect her sexual needs to be fulfilled as the husband. As such, sexual relations are a right of both spouses.

The renowned Ḥanafī jurist Imam Ibn ʿĀbidīn (may Allah have mercy on him) states: "Among the consequences of marriage is the permissibility of each spouse deriving sexual pleasure from the other." (*Radd al-Muḥtār ʿalā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 3:4)

Imam ʿAla al-Dīn al-Kasanī (may Allah have mercy on him), a prominent classical Ḥanafī jurist, states: "And both spouses share this ruling of deriving sexual pleasure, for just as the wife is lawful for the husband [in terms of deriving sexual pleasure from her]; her husband is lawful for her... It is the right of the husband to demand sex from her whenever he so desires unless there is an impediment, such as menstruation (*ḥayḍ*), postnatal bleeding (*nifās*), *ẓihār* [the husband swearing an oath to abstain from sex with his wife], being in the state of *iḥrām* and other impediments. And it is [also] the right of the wife to request sex from him, since deriving sexual pleasure from him is her right, as it is his right to derive sexual pleasure from her. When she requests sex from him, he will be obligated to agree and compelled through the courts once [meaning once throughout the marital relationship], and after that he will be religiously [and not legally] obliged to have sex with her in the context of living together in excellence and fostering the marital relationship..." (*Badāʾi al-Sanāʾi* 2:331)

Despite the fact that each spouse is religiously obliged to fulfil the sexual needs of the other, there is a slight legal difference between the husband's and the wife's right to demand sex. The husband can demand sex through a court of law and is generally expected to take the initiative, and the wife must consent to his demand unless there is a genuine physical excuse or Sharīʿa-countenanced impediment. However, in the case of the wife, even though it is religiously obligatory for the husband to fulfil her sexual needs, she cannot demand this through a court of law after he has had sex with her at least once since being married.

This distinction comes about because of various considerations, including the difference in the nature of male and female sexual desire, the husband being the head (*amīr*) of the family, and the consideration of how each party's "demanding" would affect marital relations. In other words, a woman does not have an explicit legal right to demand sex in the same fashion as a man; but this distinction exists merely because of the inherent temperamental, physical, and emotional differences between the sexes. (See: *Radd al-Muḥtār* 3:4)

All of the above is at the level of law. The spirit of marriage is different. Seeking one's rights through demands, force and argumentation contradicts the spirit of marriage, and never solves anything. Rights should always be understood in light of the following Prophetic guidance:

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخِيَارُكُمْ خِيَارُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ خُلُقًا

"The most perfect of believers are those most perfect of character; and the best of you are the best of you to your spouses." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1162)

THE HUSBAND'S RIGHT TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

A man is entitled to have sex with his wife whenever he is desirous of it and it is her religious duty to make herself available to him. Failing to do so without a valid excuse is a major sin, and this is emphasised in many hadīths:

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا دَعَا الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ فَلَمْ تَأْتِهِ ، فَبَاتَ غَضْبَانَ عَلَيْهَا ، لَعَنَتْهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ

"When a man calls his wife to his bed and she refuses, and then he sleeps being angry, the angels curse her until morning." (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3065 & *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1436, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ ، مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يَدْعُو امْرَأَتَهُ إِلَى فِرَاشِهَا فَتَأْبَى عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَانَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ سَاخِطًا عَلَيْهَا حَتَّى يَرْضَى عَنْهَا

"By the One in Whose hands is my life, there is not a man who calls his wife to his bed and she refuses except that Allah becomes angry with her until her husband is pleased with her."
(*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1436)

Such is the emphasis on this command that even if the wife happens to be busy when her husband calls her, she must leave everything and respond to his call. Sayyiduna Talq ibn ʿAlī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا الرَّجُلُ دَعَا زَوْجَتَهُ لِحَاجَتِهِ فَلْتَأْتِهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَلَى التَّنُّورِ

"When a man calls his wife for the fulfilment of his sexual need, she must come, even if she is [busy] in the cooking area." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1160)

The prophetic narrations above, and others, clearly illustrate the importance of obedience to a husband's request for sexual relations. It is a grave sin, in normal circumstances, for the wife to refuse her husband, and even more so if her refusal leads to the husband committing an unlawful act.

Imam Nawawī states in his commentary of the ḥadīth related by Abū Hurayra ﷺ quoted earlier: "This ḥadīth indicates that it is unlawful (*ḥarām*) for the wife to refuse her husband sexual relations without a valid reason. Menstruation is not considered a valid reason, since the husband has a right to enjoy her from above the garment [i.e. with her clothes acting as a barrier]." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* P: 1084)

It was in this context that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed women to seek permission from their husbands before observing a voluntary fast, since the husband may desire to fulfil his sexual needs whilst she is fasting. He ﷺ said:

لا تَصُومُ المَرْأَةُ وبَعْلُهَا شَاهِدٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

"A woman must not fast [i.e. optional fasts] whilst her husband is staying with her except with his permission." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4896)

Two points, however, are worth considering here:

Firstly, the husband's right to demand sex does not mean that he is allowed to force himself violently over his wife for sexual gratification. The ḥadīths mention the husband "sleeping in a state of anger" and "being displeased" demonstrating the fact that the husband should restrain himself from forcing himself aggressively over her and hurting her. Had this been allowed, surely the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would have permitted it for the husband.

Secondly, the wife's duty to make herself available applies in normal situations when there is no Sharī'a-countenaced impediment or when she does not have a valid excuse. The wife is required to obey her husband as long as she does not have to forgo her own rights. As such, the various ḥadīths are an admonition for women who use sex as a weapon against their husbands.

However, if the wife is menstruating or has postnatal bleeding, she is ill, physically unable to have sex, exhausted, emotionally drained or sexual activity is detrimental to her well-being, then she no longer is obligated to comply with her husband's demands for sex. Rather, the husband is required to show her sympathy by understanding that she may be unable to have sex. But, simply "not feeling up to it" is not a justified reason.

Allah Most High says:

لا يُكَلِّفُ اللهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear." (Qur'ān 2:286)

It is often observed that a husband will demand his wife to fulfil his sexual needs, disregarding the fact that she is extremely ill and not physically capable of having sex. Some threaten their wives with divorce, and support their behaviour by quoting the above ḥadīths! It is important to understand that if the wife is not in a state to engage in sexual activity and has a genuine and Islamically valid reason, but the

husband forces her, then he will be sinful. Muslim husbands need to realise that their wives are also human beings, and not machines that can be switched on and off whenever they desire!

Ultimately, these matters are best resolved through mutual understanding, regard for one another, love, gentleness and putting one's spouse before oneself. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "None of you can be a [true] believer until they love for their brother what they love for themselves" (*Sahīh Muslim* 45). The importance of this concept becomes even greater in a marital relationship.

THE WIFE'S RIGHT TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

Like men, women have sexual needs. However, unlike men, they have more control over their sexual urges due to the inherent temperamental, physical, and emotional differences between women and men.

A woman will not normally demand the fulfilment of her sexual needs. Instead, when she is in the mood, she will employ various means of seducing her husband, by adorning herself, talking to him enticingly, and gazing at him longingly. Medical experts are of the opinion that a woman's sexual desire reaches its peak directly after the completion of her menstrual cycle. A perceptive husband realises this and is responsive to her signals.

The husband is religiously obliged to fulfil the sexual needs of his wife. It is a sin on his part to deprive his wife of this right without a valid excuse or permission. This is why many jurists hold that it is religiously obligatory for the husband to have sex with his wife every so often. (See: *Badā'i al-Sanā'i* 2:331)

Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Amr ﷺ relates:

أَنْكَحَنِي أَبِي امْرَأَةً ذَاتَ حَسَبٍ ، فَكَانَ يَتَعَاهَدُ كَنَّتَهُ فَيَسْأَلُهَا عَنْ بَعْلِهَا فَتَقُولُ : نِعْمَ الرَّجُلُ مِنْ رَجُلٍ ، لَمْ يَطَأْ لَنَا فِرَاشًا وَلَمْ يُفَتِّشْ لَنَا كَنَفًا مُنْذُ أَتَيْنَاهُ ، فَلَمَّا طَالَ ذَلِكَ عَلَيْهِ ذَكَرَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ : الْقَنِي بِهِ ، فَلَقِيتُهُ بَعْدُ فَقَالَ : كَيْفَ تَصُومُ؟ قُلْتُ : كُلَّ يَوْمٍ ، قَالَ : وَكَيْفَ تَخْتِمُ؟ قُلْتُ : كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ ، قَالَ : صُمْ فِي كُلِّ شَهْرٍ ثَلَاثَةً ، وَاقْرَإِ الْقُرْآنَ فِي كُلِّ شَهْرٍ ، قَالَ قُلْتُ : أُطِيقُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ، قَالَ : صُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْجُمُعَةِ ، قُلْتُ : أُطِيقُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ، قَالَ : أَفْطِرْ يَوْمَيْنِ وَصُمْ يَوْمًا ، قَالَ قُلْتُ : أُطِيقُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ، قَالَ :

صُمْ أَفْضَلَ الصَّوْمِ صَوْمَ دَاوُدَ ، صِيَامَ يَوْمٍ وَإِفْطَارَ يَوْمٍ ، وَاقْرَأْ فِي كُلِّ سَبْعِ لَيَالٍ مَرَّةً

"My father married me off to a woman of good lineage, and he used to consult his daughter-in-law - i.e. his son's wife - and ask her about her husband. She would say to him, "An excellent man! A man who has not slept with us in bed nor removed the veil from us since we came to him!" When that went on for a long time, he (my father) mentioned that to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Send him to me." So I went to meet him soon after, and he said, "How often do you fast?" I said, "Every day." He said, "How often do you complete the Qur'ān?" I said, "Every night." He said, "Fast three days every month and complete one Qur'ān every month." I said, "I have the ability to do more than that." He said, "Then fast three days every week." I said, "I have the ability to do more than that." He said, "Fast after every two days." I said, "I have the ability to do more than that." He said, "Fast the most superior of fasts, the fasting of Dāwūd (peace be upon him) who used to fast every alternate day, and complete the recitation of the Qur'ān in seven days..." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1765)

In another variation of this same hadith, 'Abdullah ibn Amr ﷺ relates:

قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ ، أَلَمْ أُخْبَرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ ، فَقُلْتُ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، قَالَ: فَلَا تَفْعَلْ ، صُمْ وَأَفْطِرْ وَقُمْ وَنَمْ ، فَإِنَّ لِجَسَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَإِنَّ لِزَوْجِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَإِنَّ لِزَوْرِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَإِنَّ بِحَسْبِكَ أَنْ تَصُومَ كُلَّ شَهْرٍ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ، فَإِنَّ لَكَ بِكُلِّ حَسَنَةٍ عَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ صِيَامُ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ ، فَشَدَّدْتُ فَشُدِّدَ عَلَيَّ ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، إِنِّي أَجِدُ قُوَّةً قَالَ: فَصُمْ صِيَامَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَلَا تَزِدْ عَلَيْهِ ، قُلْتُ: وَمَا كَانَ صِيَامُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ؟ قَالَ: نِصْفَ الدَّهْرِ ، فَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ بَعْدَ مَا كَبِرَ: يَا لَيْتَنِي قَبِلْتُ رُخْصَةَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, "Have I not been informed that you fast all day and pray all night?" I said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Do not do it. Fast and break the fast, and pray and sleep, because your body has a right over you, your eye has a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitor has a right over you. It is enough for you to fast three days out of every month. Every good action is multiplied by ten, so that is like fasting all the time." But I was austere then and made things hard for myself. I said, "O Messenger of Allah, I feel strong." He said, "Fast the fast of the Prophet of Allah, Dāwūd (peace be upon him), but do not do more than that." I said, "What is the fast of Dāwūd (peace be upon him)?" He said, "Half the time." When he became old, 'Abdullāh used to say, "I wished I had accepted the easier options provided by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ." (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1874)

In this ḥadīth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ advises 'Abdullāh ibn Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ؓ to be moderate in his worship, and on learning that he had not slept with his wife, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, "Your wife has a right over you," clearly defining the husband's responsibility to fulfil his wife's sexual and other needs.[8]

Abū Juhayfa ؓ relates:

آخَى النَّبِيّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَيْنَ سَلْمَانَ وَأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ ، فَزَارَ سَلْمَانُ أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ فَرَأَى أُمَّ الدَّرْدَاءِ مُتَبَذِّلَةً ، فَقَالَ لَهَا : مَا شَأْنُكِ؟ قَالَتْ: أَخُوكَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ، فَجَاءَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ فَصَنَعَ لَهُ طَعَامًا ، فَقَالَ: كُلْ ، قَالَ: فَإِنِّي صَائِمٌ ، قَالَ: مَا أَنَا بِآكِلٍ حَتَّى تَأْكُلَ ، قَالَ: فَأَكَلَ ، فَلَمَّا كَانَ اللَّيْلُ ذَهَبَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ يَقُومُ ، قَالَ: نَمْ ، فَنَامَ ، ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ يَقُومُ ، فَقَالَ: نَمْ ، فَلَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ قَالَ سَلْمَانُ: قُمِ الْآنَ ، فَصَلَّيَا ، فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْمَانُ: إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا ،

8 This ḥadīth also presents a model of chastity, modesty and bashfulness of the female companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), and tells us how patiently they bore the indifference of their husbands. In the instance quoted, the politeness with which the wife of 'Abdullāh ibn Amr answered her father-in-law, when he enquired about the treatment of her husband, is an exceptional example of decency and endurance.

فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ ، فَأَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : صَدَقَ سَلْمَانُ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ joined Salmān ﷺ and Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ together in brotherhood. Salmān visited Abū al-Dardā' and saw Umm al-Dardā' [Abū al-Dardā's wife] poorly dressed and said to her, "What is the matter with you?" She said, "Your brother Abū al-Dardā' has no need of this world [meaning he did not care whether his wife adorned herself for him or not since he was very busy in worshiping Allah Most High]." Abū al-Dardā' came and made some food for him [i.e. Salmān]. Salmān said, "Eat." He said, "I am fasting." Salmān said, "I will not eat unless you eat." He says, "So he ate." In the night, Abū al-Dardā' went to stand in prayer and Salmān said to him, "Sleep!" and so he slept. Then he got up again and Salmān said, "Sleep!" When it was the latter part of the night, Salmān said, "Now get up and they both prayed together." Salmān said to him, "Your Lord has a right over you, your self has a right over you and your wife has a right over you, so give each rightful person their due right." Abū al-Dardā' came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and mentioned this to him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Salmān spoke the truth." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1867)

Scholars differ over how regularly a husband must have sex with his wife to fulfil her needs.

(1) Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī holds that it is religiously obligatory for a man to have sex with his wife once every four nights, a view supported by the following incident:

'Abd al-Razzāq relates in his *Al-Muṣannaf* from Qatāda and Sha'bī that a woman came to 'Umar ﷺ and said, "My husband stands at night [in prayer] and fasts during the day." 'Umar ﷺ said, "You have praised your husband excellently well." Ka'b ibn Sawwar said to 'Umar, "She is [actually] complaining." 'Umar ﷺ said, "How?" He said, "She claims to have no share in the marriage from her husband [meaning her husband does not fulfil her rights]." 'Umar ﷺ said, "If you understand this much, then you decide between them." He (Ka'b) said, "O Amīr al-Mu'minīn! Allah has permitted him four wives. So she has one day of every four days, and one night of every four nights." (Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* P: 161)

In light of this, Imam Ghazālī's view is that a man must fulfil his wife's sexual needs once every four nights, since he is permitted to spend the other three nights with his other wives, were he to have four. This is also the favoured position of Imam Ṭaḥāwī (may Allah have mercy on him) of the Ḥanafī School. (See: *Radd al-Muhtār* 3:203 & *Jadīd Fiqhī Masā'il* 2:172)

2) Imam Ibn Ḥazm (may Allah have mercy on him) holds that it is religiously obligatory for a man to sleep with his wife once every month. He states: "It is obligatory upon a man to have sex with his wife at least once in every interval (*ṭuhr*) between menstruations if he is able to do so, otherwise he will be sinful. The proof for this is the statement of Allah Most High: "But when they are purified, then approach them from where Allah has commanded you." (*Al-Muḥalla* P: 1672)

Imam Ibn Ḥazm derives his opinion from the word of Allah Most High: "Approach them," a command indicative of obligation. Most scholars consider this to be a statement that permits sex after menstruation – her menses prohibited sex, and so Allah Most High returns permission once she is purified. Imam Ibn Ḥazm understood the text literally and ruled that having sex after one's wife is purified from menstruation is obligatory.

3) According to some scholars, a man must have sex with his wife once every four months or else he is sinful. They substantiate their position with the following narration:

Ibn Jarīr relates, "I was informed by the one whom I trust that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ, while on patrol, heard a woman saying [singing poetry]: "This night stretches out and is dark, and that I am without a companion to be intimate with has made me sleepless. Were it not for the fear of Allah like unto Whom there is none, the sides of this couch would have been moving." 'Umar ﷺ said, "What is wrong with you?" She said, "You sent my husband on an expedition some months ago, and I long for him." He said, "Do you intend to do wrong?" She said, "I seek the refuge of Allah!" He said, "So restrain yourself, for it is only a matter of the message being delivered to him." 'Umar ﷺ sent a message to him [to return]. Then he went to [his daughter] Ḥafṣa and said, "I want to ask you about a matter which concerns me, so dispel it for me. How long can a woman remain without her husband?" She lowered her head and was shy. He said, "Truly Allah is not shy of the truth." So she gestured with her hand indicating three months; and if that is not possible, then four months. Hence 'Umar ﷺ declared

that armies must not be kept on service for more than four months." (*Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* 1: 161-162) [4]

Imām Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma (may Allah have mercy on him), a prominent Ḥanbalī jurist, also concurs with this position in his masterpiece of Ḥanbalī and comparative fiqh *Al-Mughnī*. He asserts that if the husband abstains from fulfilling his wife's sexual needs due to an Islamically valid reason such as illness, then there is no fixed time-period for having sex with her. If, however, he abstains without any genuine reason, he is obliged to have sex within four months, and if he fails to fulfil her sexual needs after this period, he is ordered to divorce her. (*Al-Mughnī* 8: 551-552)

3) Most jurists (*fuqahā'*), including many Ḥanafī scholars, hold that it is religiously obligatory for a husband to have sex with his wife every so often, without this being fixed at a specific frequency. The prominent Ḥanafī jurist Imām Haskafī states, "It is religiously obligatory for a husband to have sex with his wife every so often, and he must not reach the duration of four months without her permission..."

Imām Ibn 'Ābidīn explains this by stating that the husband is religiously obligated to have sex with his wife every so often, unless he has some kind of illness or some other valid excuse. He then cites Imām Ṭaḥāwī from the Ḥanafī School who holds the view that the husband is obligated to have sex with her once every four nights. However, he further states, that the established position of the Ḥanafī School (*ẓāhir al-madhhab*) is that there is no fixed time-limit, rather the husband will be obligated to spend the night with his wife and fulfil her sexual needs every so often. (See *Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 3:202-203, Bāb al-Qasam)

According to the author, this last position seems to be the most reasonable and practical, especially in our times. As such, the husband must engage in sexual relations with his wife every so often enough to maintain her outward and inward chastity such that she does not incline towards committing an unlawful act. If a man consistently refuses his wife, he will be sinful.

However, as in the case of the husband's right to sexual relations, the obligation to fulfil the sexual needs of one's wife is conditional on the man's physical ability to have sex with his wife. If the husband is too

[4] It is worth noting here that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ did not ask his wife, but rather his daughter. Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī states that the reason for this was that 'Umar ﷺ expected an impartial answer from his daughter. He thought that there was a possibility of his wife's answer being biased, since it was her husband who was asking. (*Al-Ifādāt al-Yaumiyya min al-Ifādāt al-Qaumiyya* 4:300)

ill or weak to engage in any sexual activity or fears that having sex with his wife will result in unbearable weakness, then he is not required to fulfil his wife's sexual needs, and will not be sinful.

- 3 -

SEXUAL RELATIONS: HOW OFTEN?

WE HAVE DISCUSSED the woman's religious right to sexual relations, we will now examine in detail the frequency with which a couple should engage in sexual activity through mutual agreement, aside from the religious obligations and rights of each spouse.

The Sharīʿa does not fix a specific limit or restriction on how often a couple may engage in sexual activity, as the temperament, physique and sexual libido of each individual varies considerably. As such, couples should mutually decide what is best suited for them. There is no general set rule in this matter; the answer will vary from couple to couple, keeping in mind the needs of both spouses.

However, Islam is a religion of moderation and its adherents are encouraged to be moderate in all aspects of life, since the best course is the middle course. An extremist tendency in either direction is at odds with the spirit of Islam. Moderation permeates every teaching of Islam, and even in sexual matters, moderation is the ideal approach.

Complete celibacy or reducing one's sexual activity to the bare minimum may be unhealthy. It is therefore unadvisable for a couple to abandon sex altogether given the fact that Allah Most High has blessed them with a means of fulfilling their sexual needs.

Similarly, excessive sex is likely to be harmful to one's health. Faqīh Abū 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī relates in his *Al-Bustān* from Sayyiduna Ali ﷺ that, "Whoever is desirous of a long healthy life should eat in the mornings and evenings, avoid taking loans, abstain from walking around bare-footed, and desist from having sex excessively." (*Qānūn-e-Mubāsharāt* P: 16)

Note that this advice is not a Sharīʿa ruling, but rather a piece of general advice. It is advisable in this regard to consult a specialist should one be concerned about one's personal situation.

Some scholars recommend having sex once a week and consider this to fall within the ambit of moderation. They base their position on the hadīth related by Aws ibn Aws al-Thaqafī ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ غَسَّلَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَاغْتَسَلَ ، ثُمَّ بَكَّرَ وَابْتَكَرَ وَمَشَى وَلَمْ يَرْكَبْ وَدَنَا مِنَ الْإِمَامِ فَاسْتَمَعَ
وَلَمْ يَلْغُ ، كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ خُطْوَةٍ عَمَلُ سَنَةٍ : أَجْرُ صِيَامِهَا وَقِيَامِهَا

> "Whoever causes [his spouse] to bathe and bathes himself on Friday, then goes out early [for Friday prayers], walks and does not ride, and takes his seat close to the imam and listens attentively, and does not indulge in futility, will earn the reward of a year's fasting and praying at night for every step he takes." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 349 & *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* 1381, the wording is of *Abū Dāwūd*)

In this hadīth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ uses the phrase, "*man ghassala*" which translates literally as "whoever bathes another" or "whoever causes another to bathe." Imam Suyūṭī (may Allah have mercy on him) interprets this statement in his commentary of *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* where he says, "...And it is said that the meaning of *ghassala* (bathes another or causes another to bathe) means he has sex with his spouse before leaving for [Friday] prayers, because this will aid him in lowering his gaze on the way..." (*Sunan al-Nasā'ī bi Sharḥ al-Suyūṭī* 3:95)

Imam Ibn Qudāma states: "The meaning of the Messenger of Allah's ﷺ statement "*man ghassala wa igtasala*" is that he has sex with his wife and then takes a bath." (*Al-Mughnī* 2:201)

Accordingly, one of the meanings of this hadīth is that whoever has sex with his wife on Friday and so takes a bath himself and causes his wife to take a bath, and puts into practice the other actions mentioned, will earn the reward of a year's fasting and praying at night for every step he takes to Friday prayers.

Because Friday comes once every week, these scholars consider that having sex once a week is recommended and in line with the spirit of moderation.

In conclusion, moderation is the golden rule. Having sex too often can be exhausting and unhealthy, whilst abandoning sex altogether or reducing it to a bare minimum may also be damaging and unhealthy. Couples should negotiate what is an achievable goal for them in terms of sexual activity so that they may settle on a level that is mutually

satisfactory. The best way to achieve this is through honest and respectful discussion. That way, sex will be more fulfilling for both spouses, *In shā' Allāh.*

- 4 -

SELECTING A TIME FOR SEXUAL RELATIONS

GENERALLY, THE SHARĪʿA does not specify any particular time for engaging in or desisting from sexual activity. Married couples may choose any time of the day or night for sex, unless there is some other external factor prohibiting sex, such as the time for prayer is about to end and one has not yet prayed, or the wife is menstruating. It is authentically reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ engaged in sexual relations with his wives at various times of the day and night.

Furthermore, sexual activity can only take place if the urge exists and if the couple have the necessary agility and are relaxed. As such, it is impractical to impose specific times for sex, given that couples differ from one another in their hours of work, times of resting and sleeping, and their desire to have sex. As a result, Sharīʿa has not legislated a time in which they should engage in sexual relations.

Scholars mention, however, certain times that are favourable for sexual activity, and others during which it is disliked. Statements are transmitted from certain Companions and early Muslims ﷺ.

It is worth noting that these preferences are based on medical reasons, individual experiences or personal judgments, and do not constitute a legal (*sharʿī*) ruling. There is no sin attached to disregarding them. Many of the statements quoted from the Companions and early Muslims in this respect are not authentically established with proper chains of transmission, for instance the poetry transmitted from Sayyidunā ʿAlī ﷺ on this subject.

Given this, one need not consider the advice below to be binding or authentically established. It should not be given more importance than it deserves, but at the same time, one should not consider what some books mention about preferable times for having sex and times to avoid sex as baseless. These recommendations are based on experience

and personal judgment and this is the context in which the terms "preferred" and "disliked" should be read in the coming sections.

PREFERRED TIMES

1) The optimal time for sex is when one is relaxed and a temperamental balance exists in both spouses. Any tension or anxiety, whether hunger, thirst, anger, depression or illness will dampen the passion and may well prove to be unhealthy for the body. For some people, the optimal time is the night, when the husband is unoccupied with the pressures of work, whilst others may feel fresh and agile in the morning directly after waking up from sleep.

2) Some scholars consider the latter part of the night to be the best time for sex because the stomach is full during the earlier part of the night, and sex on a full stomach is harmful. Sexual relations between couples are best suited after food has been completely digested. This was also the usual practice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, although he is reported to have slept with his wives at other times as well.

Abū Isḥāq relates, "I asked al-Aswad ibn Yazīd regarding what Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ informed him about the [night] prayer of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. She ('Ā'isha ﷺ) said:

كَانَ يَنَامُ أَوَّلَ اللَّيْلِ وَيُحْيِي آخِرَهُ ، ثُمَّ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ قَضَى حَاجَتَهُ ثُمَّ يَنَامُ ، فَإِذَا كَانَ عِنْدَ النِّدَاءِ الأَوَّلِ ، قَالَتْ : وَثَبَ – وَلَا وَاللَّهِ مَا قَالَتْ : قَامَ – فَأَفَاضَ عَلَيْهِ الْمَاءَ – وَلَا وَاللَّهِ مَا قَالَتْ : اغْتَسَلَ ، وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ مَا تُرِيدُ – وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ جُنُبًا تَوَضَّأَ وُضُوءَ الرَّجُلِ لِلصَّلَاةِ ثُمَّ صَلَّى الرَّكْعَتَيْنِ

'He would sleep in the early part of the night, and wake up in the latter part [to offer prayers]. If he then wished to fulfil his desire with his wife, he would fulfil his desire, and then sleep. When the first call to prayer was made he would jump up (by Allah, she, i.e. 'Ā'isha, did not say, "He would stand up") and pour water over himself (by Allah she, i.e. 'Ā'isha, did not say that he took a bath but I know what she meant). If he was not in a state of major ritual impurity, he would [merely] perform ablution, the ablution for prayer and then offer two *Rak'āts* [*Sunna* of *Fajr*].'" (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 739)

For those who find it difficult to wait for the end of the night, a practical solution is to eat a light meal in the early part of the evening. In this way, the stomach will not be full when having sex in the earlier part of the night.

3) Sexual relations on Friday and the night preceding Friday is also recommended and some consider this virtuous. Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī states in his renowned *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* that according to some scholars, sex on Friday and the night preceding it is recommended (*mustaḥab*) due to the ḥadīth narrated by Aws ibn Aws al-Thaqafi ﷺ regarding the reward of one bathing and causing the spouse to bathe on Fridays, quoted earlier. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:175)

DISLIKED TIMES

1) Having sex when one needs to relieve oneself is both disliked and detrimental to one's health, whether one needs to urinate or defecate. There is also a ḥadīth reported in this regard. Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

لَا يُجَامِعَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ وَبِهِ حَقْنٌ مِنْ خَلَاءٍ ، فَإِنَّهُ يَكُوْنُ مِنْهُ الْبَوَاسِيْرُ ، وَلَا يُجَامِعَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ وَبِهِ حَقْنٌ مِنْ بَوْلٍ ، فَإِنَّهُ يَكُوْنُ النَّوَاصِيْرُ

"One of you should not have sex when there is a need to defecate, for that causes the illness of piles (*bawāsīr*), and one of you should not have sex when there is a need to urinate, for that causes the illness of tumour (*nawāṣīr*)." (*Kanz al-'Ummāl* 44902, the chain of transmission for this report is not authenticated)

2) Imam Ghazālī states in his *Iḥyā'* that it is disliked to have sex during three nights of each month: the first, the last and the middle night [i.e. the fourteenth night]. It is said that the devils appear on these nights where sexual relations are taking place between spouses. The detestability of sexual relations on these nights is related from 'Alī, Mu'awiya and Abū Hurayra ﷺ. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:175)

SEX DURING PREGNANCY AND THE PERIOD OF BREASTFEEDING

There is no difference of opinion between the scholars that it is permitted for a couple to have sex whilst the wife is pregnant. Likewise, it is permitted to have sex during the period of breastfeeding.

Sayyidunā Sa'd ibn Waqqāṣ ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ رَجُلًا جَاءَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَعْزِلُ عَنِ امْرَأَتِي ، فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لِمَ تَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ؟ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: أُشْفِقُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا أَوْ عَلَى أَوْلَادِهَا ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَوْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ ضَارًّا ، ضَرَّ فَارِسَ وَالرُّومَ

"A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "I practice coitus interruptus [i.e. withdrawal method or *'azl*] with my wife." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Why do you do that?" He replied, "I fear for her child or her children." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "If it was harmful, then it would have harmed the Persians and Byzantines." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1443)

Mulla 'Alī al-Qārī (may Allah have mercy on him), the great scholar of ḥadīth and Ḥanafī jurist, explains that the man feared for the child in his wife's womb, and that having sex with her may cause her to conceive again, resulting in twins which could weaken both foetuses. A second interpretation is that he feared for the child being breastfed, in that sex may be harmful for the suckling child. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ rejected both notions saying that if sex was harmful during pregnancy or during the period of breastfeeding, it would have harmed the Persians and Byzantines. (See: *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* 6:238

Judāma bint Wahb al-Asadiyya ﷺ relates that she heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

لَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ أَنْ أَنْهَى عَنِ الْغِيلَةِ حَتَّى ذَكَرْتُ أَنَّ الرُّومَ وَفَارِسَ يَصْنَعُونَ ذَلِكَ فَلَا يَضُرُّ أَوْلَادَهُمْ

"I considered prohibiting sex during the period of breastfeeding (*ghīla*), but I remembered the Byzantines and Persians practicing this, and their children were not harmed..." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1442)

Moreover, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade sex with a woman pregnant from another man (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1131), from which the scholars inferred the permissibility of sex with a woman pregnant from oneself.

Having said the above, scholars recommend that couples should seek reliable medical advice before having sex during both pregnancy and the period of breastfeeding. If a particular couple are advised by a medical specialist that sex is harmful during pregnancy or the period of breastfeeding, whether it puts the mother at risk, the suckling child or the foetus, then sexual relations should be avoided (*Adab-e-Mubāsharāt* P: 34-35). The hadith of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in this context, is understood to apply to normal situations.

Furthermore, the husband should ensure he is extremely gentle and careful with his pregnant wife during sexual relations. He should avoid positions that may cause discomfort to her, especially in the final stages of pregnancy when the wife can become tired and exhausted very easily. (Aḥmad Kan'ān, *Uṣūl al-Mu'āshara al Zawjiyya* P: 79)

SEXUAL RELATIONS DURING MENSTRUATION (ḤAYḌ) AND POSTNATAL BLEEDING (NIFĀS)

1) Having sex during menstruation is absolutely and emphatically unlawful (*harām*) as established by the explicit text of the Qur'ān and numerous Prophetic ḥadīths. There is complete scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) within the Muslim *Umma* on this. Allah Most High says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ
فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

"They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: "It is an impurity. So keep away from women during menstruation; and do not approach them until they are cleansed. But when they are cleansed, then approach them from where Allah has commanded you. Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure." (Qur'ān 2:222)

Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates:

أَنَّ الْيَهُودَ كَانُوا إِذَا حَاضَتْ الْمَرْأَةُ فِيهِمْ ، لَمْ يُؤَاكِلُوهَا وَلَمْ يُجَامِعُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ ، فَسَأَلَ
أَصْحَابُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ إِلَى آخِرِ الْآيَةِ ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : اصْنَعُوا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا النِّكَاحَ

"Among the Jews, when a woman menstruated, they did not eat with her, nor did they live with menstruating women in their houses. So the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ [regarding this practice], so Allah Most High revealed: "They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: "It is an impurity. So keep away from women during menstruation" till the end of the verse. Thus, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Do everything except for sex." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 302)

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

مَنْ أَتَى حَائِضًا أَوْ امْرَأَةً فِي دُبُرِهَا أَوْ كَاهِنًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"The one who has sex with a menstruating woman, or with a woman in her anus, or who goes to a fortune-teller, has disbelieved (*kufr*) in that which was revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 135)

The "*kufr*" mentioned in this ḥadīth is to indicate the severity (*taghlīẓ*) of these actions, in that sex during menstruation, anal sex and accepting as true what a fortune-teller says are acts that are close to disbelief. Others hold that if these acts are carried out whilst considering them to be lawful (*istiḥlālan*), one would leave the fold of Islam without doubt. (See: *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī bi Sharḥ Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* 1:440)

Imām Nawawī states, "Having actual sex with one's spouse [during menstruation] is unlawful by the consensus of the Muslims due to the explicit texts of the Qur'ān and Sunna. Our scholars state that a Muslim who considers having actual vaginal sex with a menstruating woman as lawful has become a disbeliever (*kāfir*) and an apostate (*murtad*). Someone who indulges in this without considering it to be lawful, and does it forgetfully (*nisyān*), or without knowing that the woman was menstruating, or is ignorant of its prohibition, or was compelled, then no sin was committed and he is not required to expiate for it. However,

if he has sex with her deliberately, knowing that she is menstruating, knowing of its prohibition and with a free choice, then he has certainly committed a major sin (*kabira*). Imam Shāfi'ī (may Allah have mercy on him) has stressed that it is a major sin, and sincere repentance is necessary." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim* P: 366)

Sex during menstruation is also harmful from a medical point of view. Research has discovered that menstrual flow contains certain toxic substances that can be detrimental if they enter into the male body or are prevented a clear passage of flow from the female body. This can occur when having sex while the woman is menstruating. Hence, sex during menstruation has resulted in an increase in both men and women being inflicted with various types of painful and often fatal blood-borne diseases. (*African Journal of Reproductive Health* Vol. 8,No. 2,Aug. 2004 pp. 55-58)

As such, the spouses must completely avoid sex during the period of menstruation. If they ever engage in it, they must sincerely repent and ask Allah Most High for forgiveness. They should also give something in charity as a form of expiation.

Sayyiduna Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regarding a man who has sex with his wife while she is menstruating that;

يتصدق بنصف دينار

"He should give a half *dinar* in charity." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 136)

The majority of the classical scholars, including Imam Abū Hanīfa, Imam Mālik and Imam Shāfi'ī (may Allah have mercy on them all), consider giving something in charity to be optional, and not a requirement for the acceptance of one's repentance (*tawba*). As such, seeking forgiveness from Allah Most High is sufficient. However, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on him) and some others hold that giving something in charity is necessary along with sincere repentance. (See: *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim* P: 366-367)

2) All the *Sunni* Schools of Islamic law (*madhhabs*) are in agreement that it is permitted for the husband to derive sexual pleasure from his wife through direct skin-to-skin contact of the area above her navel and below her knees. As such, kissing, hugging, embracing is all permitted. The husband may touch any area of the wife's body from above the navel and below the knees with his hands, his penis or any other part of his body. It is also permitted for the wife to masturbate her husband,

since the husband is not touching any area that is in between her navel and knees. Shaykh Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfirā'īnī and many others relate a complete scholarly consensus on this. (*Al-Minhaj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1: 367)

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates:

كَانَ إِحْدَانَا إِذَا كَانَتْ حَائِضًا ، أَمَرَهَا رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَتَأْتَزِرُ بِإِزَارٍ ثُمَّ يُبَاشِرُهَا

"When anyone amongst us [i.e. the wives of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ] menstruated, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would order her to wear an *īzār* [i.e. covering between the navel and knee], and then approach her." (*Saḥīḥ Muslim* 293)

Haram ibn Ḥākim ﷺ relates from his paternal uncle that:

أَنَّهُ سَأَلَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا يَحِلُّ لِي مِنْ امْرَأَتِي وَهِيَ حَائِضٌ قَالَ لَكَ مَا فَوْقَ الْإِزَارِ

"He asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "What is permitted for me to do with my wife when she is menstruating?" He said, "Whatever is above the covering (*īzār*)." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 214)

It is stated in the Ḥanafī Fiqh reference work *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya*, "It is permitted to kiss one's menstruating wife, sleep with her and enjoy her entire body, except for that which is in between the navel and knees according to Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and Imam Abū Yūsuf..." (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 1:39)

Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn states in his *Radd al-Muḥtār*, "It is permitted to enjoy the navel and everything above it, and the knee and everything below it, even without a barrier." (*Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 1:292)

3) As for the area between the navel and knees, the majority of the scholars, including Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, Imam Mālik and Imam Shāfi'ī, hold that direct skin-to-skin contact of that area is not permitted, irrespective of the presence or absence of sexual desire (*shahwa*). However, indirect contact, such as stimulation through a barrier [like clothing] is permissible. Therefore, it is permitted for the husband to

rub his private parts against his wife's private parts if there is some sort of clothing in between that prevents the transfer of body-heat. This position is based on the ḥadīths in which there is mention of wearing the covering (izār).

Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn, of the Ḥanafī School, states: "It is also permitted to enjoy that which is in between the navel and knees but with a barrier [such as clothing], without actual sex, even if blood spreads all over." (*Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 1:292)

However, Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Imam Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, Imam Nawawī and some other scholars hold that it is permitted for the husband to touch the area between the navel and knees of his wife's body, even without a barrier, as long as the actual vagina and anus are avoided. They base their position on the statement of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ where he said, "Do everything except for sex." (For further details on the various positions of the Imams, see: *Fatḥ al-Bārī* 1:525 & *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim* P: 367)ww

4) Finally, according to Imam Shāfi'ī, Imam Mālik, Imam Aḥmad and the majority of early (*salaf*) and late (*khalaf*) scholars, the restriction on sexual relations remains even after menstruation ends until the wife takes the obligatory ritual bath (*ghusl*) or, in the absence of water, a dry ablution (*tayammum*). (*Al-Minhaj* P: 367)

According to the Ḥanafī School, however, there is some detail regarding this. If menstruation ends after the ten-day maximum duration, then sex is permitted, even without a ritual bath, though having a bath is recommended. When menstruation ends before the ten-day maximum duration, and it is after the completion of her normal menstrual habit (*'āda*), then sex is permitted only after having a bath or the passing of one whole prayer-time. If it ends before the completion of her normal menstrual habit, it remains prohibited and sinful to have sex, even after she bathes, until she completes her normal habit. (See: *Radd al-Muḥtār* 1:294 and *Imdād al-Fattāḥ Sharḥ Nūr al-Īḍāḥ* P: 141-142)

It should be noted that the rules pertaining to menstruation also apply to postnatal bleeding (*nifās*). As far as abnormal uterine bleeding (*istiḥāḍa*) is concerned, there are no sexual restrictions and it is permitted for the couple to have sex in this period even if blood spreads all over, though the wife should wash and remove traces of blood before sexual relations. (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 1:294)

- 5 -

PREPARING FOR SEXUAL RELATIONS

TO MAINTAIN A healthy sexual relationship, it is vital to prepare psychologically and physically for sexual relations. Preparing for sex is as important as sex itself. Both spouses should take care to prepare themselves for sex to enjoy their union to the full extent. Being remiss in this could have detrimental consequences.

It was a habit of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to clean his mouth and teeth with the tooth-stick (*siwāk*) when entering the house to visit his wives. Shurayh ibn Hāni' relates:

سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ ، قُلْتُ : بِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ كَانَ يَبْدَأُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ بَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَتْ : بِالسِّوَاكِ

"I asked Ā'isha ﷺ, "What did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ do first when he entered his house?" She replied, "Use the *Siwāk*." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 253)

When returning from a long journey, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ would not enter their homes at night unexpectedly, rather, they would give prior notice to allow their wives to prepare themselves for their returning husbands. Sayyiduna Jābir ﷺ relates:

كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي غَزَاةٍ ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمْنَا الْمَدِينَةَ ذَهَبْنَا لِنَدْخُلَ ، فَقَالَ: أَمْهِلُوا حَتَّى نَدْخُلَ لَيْلًا أَيْ عِشَاءً كَيْ تَمْتَشِطَ الشَّعِثَةُ وَتَسْتَحِدَّ الْمُغِيبَةُ

"We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on an expedition. When we came back to Madina, we intended to enter our houses. So he ﷺ said, "Wait until we enter in the latter part of the evening

so that a woman with dishevelled hair can comb her hair, and a woman whose husband has been absent can shave her pubic hair." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4949 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1928, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Sayyiduna Jābir ﷺ also relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا قَدِمَ أَحَدُكُمْ لَيْلًا فَلَا يَأْتِيَنَّ أَهْلَهُ طُرُوقًا حَتَّى تَسْتَحِدَّ الْمُغِيبَةُ وَتَمْتَشِطَ الشَّعِثَةُ

"When one of you comes [back from a journey] at night, he should not go to his family as a night visitor, [but wait] until the woman whose husband has been absent can shave her pubic hair, and the dishevelled woman can comb her hair." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4948 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1928, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Imam Abū 'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi states in his *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* that couples should fix a particular time of day or night for sexual relations so that both are prepared physically and psychologically. This not only enhances their pleasure, but will also eliminate the possibility of either of them being unprepared, whether mentally or physically. (*Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* P: 280)

PREPARATION OF THE WIFE

1) Cleanliness and Personal Hygiene

Purity (*ṭahāra*), cleanliness (*naẓāfa*) and personal hygiene have been given great importance in Islam. Purity is the key to prayer - the principal act of worship in a Muslim's life. Purity brings about the love of Allah Most High towards oneself. Allah Most High says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

"Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." (Qur'ān 2:222)

Sayyiduna Abū Mālik al-Ash'arī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

الطُّهُورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ

"Purity is half of faith..." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 223)

As such, a Muslim must remain pure and clean at all times, and even more so when it comes to marriage.

It is regrettable that some women do not see the importance of remaining clean at home in front of their husbands, yet when they attend public gatherings or visit friends they ensure that they clean and adorn themselves. Others make great efforts to beautify themselves before marriage, but once they find their soul mate and get married, they neglect this important factor.

This is actually contrary to the teachings of Islam. A wife must first and foremost adorn herself for her husband, and is rewarded for doing so. To beautify oneself in order to attract the attention of non-Mahram men (non-family members) is absolutely unlawful and a great sin. She should try her utmost best to remain clean at home in front of her husband. If she is in an unclean state due to household chores, she should clean herself as soon as she has finished her work. It is unbecoming for her to linger around in an unkempt state for long periods after completing her work.

For a healthy sexual relationship, anything that causes distaste or is offensive should be completely avoided. The wife should ensure that she does not have bad breath or any other body odours as this can be a major "turn off". The Messenger of Allah ﷺ even forbade people from entering the Mosque if they had a bad mouth odour. Sayyiduna Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ ثُومًا أَوْ بَصَلًا فَلْيَعْتَزِلْنَا - أَوْ قَالَ - فَلْيَعْتَزِلْ مَسْجِدَنَا وَلْيَقْعُدْ فِي بَيْتِهِ

"Whoever eats garlic or onion should keep away from us." Or he said, "He should keep away from our Mosque and remain in his house." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 817)

Sayyiduna Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ also relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَقْلَةِ - الثُّومِ - وَقَالَ مَرَّةً: مَنْ أَكَلَ الْبَصَلَ وَالثُّومَ وَالْكُرَّاثَ - فَلَا يَقْرَبَنَّ
مَسْجِدَنَا ، فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَتَأَذَّى مِمَّا يَتَأَذَّى مِنْهُ بَنُو آدَمَ

"He who ate of this plant, i.e. garlic" – and once he said, "He who ate onion and garlic and leek – should not approach our Mosque,

for the angels are harmed by the same things as the children of Adam." (*Sahīh Muslim* 564)

The above hadith demonstrates that bad smells offend both humans and angels. To avoid offending one's spouse is even more important for obvious reasons, so the wife should ensure that she avoids dirt, filth and bad odour of the mouth and body. She should bathe and change her clothes regularly. The teeth and mouth should be brushed as frequently as necessary in order that her spouse is not harmed when they kiss each other. She should always aspire to present herself in a clean manner in front of her husband.

If one has a genuine medical problem with body odour, one should resort to medical treatment. There are many simple and effective treatments for this condition. A medical diagnosis is not usually necessary for bad odour, but where the problem persists despite all efforts to treat it, it may be worth getting a medical opinion.

2) Adornment and Beautification

A key part of preparing for sexual relations is to ensure that the wife beautifies herself for her husband. Human beings are highly visual creatures that enjoy seeing and experiencing things that are beautiful. This is why Islam encourages its adherents to adorn themselves whenever they attend public gatherings such as the *Jumu'a* and *'Īd* prayers. If Muslims should appear pleasant in front of their fellows, then this is considerably more important where spouses are concerned.

As such, the importance of a woman adorning herself in preparation for sexual relations with her husband cannot be overstated. Allah Most High describes the maidens of paradise known as "*hūr al-'ayn*" or "wide-eyed virgins", by saying:

كَأَنَّهُنَّ ٱلْيَاقُوتُ وَٱلْمَرْجَانُ

"They will look like rubies and corals." (Qur'ān 55:58)

This indicates that adornment is a means of attracting the attention of one's spouse. A woman who is desirous of a healthy sexual relationship, and by extension a healthy marriage, should endeavour to beautify herself for her husband. In this way, the husband will also be saved from casting lustful glances at other women.

Unfortunately, some Muslims consider that it is inappropriate for a

practising Muslim woman to adorn herself in a captivating manner for her husband. This is far from the truth. Not only is it permissible for a woman to use the various means of beautification for her husband, but rather she is rewarded for doing so. Part of being a pious and practising Muslim is to live a life of chastity, and anything that is a means to this is encouraged, provided it is not specifically prohibited by Shari'a.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also encouraged women to adorn themselves and maintain a good appearance for their husbands. Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates:

أَوْمَتْ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْ وَرَاءِ سِتْرٍ بِيَدِهَا كِتَابٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَقَبَضَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَدَهُ ، فَقَالَ : مَا أَدْرِي أَيَدُ رَجُلٍ أَمْ يَدُ امْرَأَةٍ؟ قَالَتْ : بَلْ امْرَأَةٌ . قَالَ : لَوْ كُنْتِ امْرَأَةً لَغَيَّرْتِ أَظْفَارَكِ يَعْنِي بِالْحِنَّاءِ

"A woman made a gesture from behind a curtain to indicate that she had a letter for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ withdrew his hand and said, "I do not know if this is a man's or a woman's hand." She said, "But rather, a woman." He said, "If you were a woman, you would have made changes to your nails, meaning with *Henna*." (*Sunan Abū Dāwūd* 4163)

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates that Hind bint 'Utba said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "O Prophet of Allah! Accept my allegiance (*bay'a*)." He replied:

لَا أُبَايِعُكِ حَتَّى تُغَيِّرِي كَفَّيْكِ كَأَنَّهُمَا كَفَّا سَبُعٍ

"I shall not accept your allegiance until you change the palms of your hands, for they look like the paws of a beast of prey!" (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4162)

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ also relates:

قَدِمَتْ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حِلْيَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ النَّجَاشِيِّ أَهْدَاهَا لَهُ ، فِيهَا خَاتَمٌ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ فِيهِ فَصٌّ حَبَشِيٌّ ، قَالَتْ : فَأَخَذَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِعُودٍ مُعْرِضًا عَنْهُ أَوْ بِبَعْضِ أَصَابِعِهِ ، ثُمَّ دَعَا أُمَامَةَ ابْنَةَ أَبِي الْعَاصِ – ابْنَةَ ابْنَتِهِ زَيْنَبَ – فَقَالَ : تَحَلَّيْ بِهَذَا يَا بُنَيَّةُ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received some jewels presented by Negus (*najashī*) as a gift to him. They contained a gold ring with an Abyssinian stone." She says, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ turning his attention away from it, took it by means of a stick or one of his fingers, then called Umāma, daughter of Abū al-'Āṣ and daughter of his daughter Zaynab, and said: "Adorn yourself with this, my dear daughter." (*Sunan Abī Dawūd* 4232)

The wife's beautification, therefore, contributes to a healthy sexual relationship, and is a key element of the physical preparation for sexual relations. Some of the important things in this regard are as follows:

a) The wife should ensure that she removes unwanted hair from her body, should her husband want her to do so. The hadith recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* has already been quoted wherein the Messenger of Allah ﷺ considered "shaving of the pubic hair" as part of a wife's preparation for her returning husband. Removing body hair is completely permissible, rather it is recommended and rewarded if the intention is to please the husband.

A woman may remove unwanted hair from her arms, legs, and the rest of her body, with special emphasis to the pubic, underarm, and facial hair. The only exception is of shaping the eyebrows, which is not permitted according to the Prophetic hadith.

Some women may experience excessive growth of hair on their cheeks and other parts of the face. It is recommended for them to remove such facial hair, as this will prevent them from resembling men. Imam Nawawī, whilst commentating on the ḥadīth in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade women from removing facial hair, states: "This action [of women removing facial hair] is not permitted unless a woman grows a beard or a moustache, in which case it is not unlawful to remove it, rather it is recommended according to us [...]. The prohibition [in the ḥadīth] is of shaping the eyebrows." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Saḥīḥ Muslim* P: 1602)

Removing unwanted body hair is permitted through the various means available, such as waxing, using cream, powder and a razor. It is also permitted to bleach the hair instead. There also seems to be no Shari'a impediment from permanently removing body hair, since the aim is to remove unwanted hair, whether temporarily or permanently.

However, a condition is stipulated that her nakedness (*awra*) is not exposed, even in front of Muslim women. A Muslim woman's nakedness (*awra*) in front of other Muslim women is from her navel

up to and including her knees. As such, it is not permitted for a woman to expose the area in between the navel and knees for hair-removal, even before other Muslim women. Similarly, a Muslim woman's *awra* in front of non-Muslim women is the whole body with the exception of the face and hands. Therefore, she cannot expose other parts of her body before non-Muslim women. (*Al-Hidāya* 4:461 & *Radd al-Muḥtār* 6:371)

b) A woman may adorn herself for sexual relations with her husband by dressing up in appealing, seductive and revealing clothing. It is not against religious propriety (*adab*) and modesty (*ḥayā'*) to wear clothing such as luxurious lingerie and alluring underwear, provided it is only for the husband and that there is no third person with the couple. In fact, as mentioned earlier, if the intention is to keep herself and her husband chaste, she will be rewarded, *In shā' Allāh*.

It should be noted, however, that the stronger and more precautionary view in the Ḥanafī school is that it is necessary (*wājib*) for both men and women to cover their essential nakedness (from navel to knees) even when alone. The exception to this is when there is a need, such as taking a shower, relieving oneself, changing one's clothes or having sexual relations with one's spouse. (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 1:404)

As such, the wife should ensure that she covers the area between her navel and knee properly when she is alone at home. She should only dress up in the types of clothing described above in the presence of her husband and, ideally, restricted to the bedroom setting.

c) A pleasant scent can have a significant impact on others. Beautiful fragrances please the sense of smell, and it is part of the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) to take pleasure in delicate scents. This is why applying perfume was the practice of all the Prophets of Allah. Sayyiduna Abū Ayyūb ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَرْبَعٌ مِنْ سُنَنِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ: الْحَيَاءُ وَالتَّعَطُّرُ وَالسِّوَاكُ وَالنِّكَاحُ

"Four things are from the ways of the Prophets: modesty, applying perfume, using a tooth-stick (*siwāk*) and marriage." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1080)

The beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ also loved perfume, and encouraged it. Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ لَا يَرُدُّ الطِّيبَ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not refuse perfume." (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5585)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ رَيْحَانٌ فَلَا يَرُدَّهُ ، فَإِنَّهُ خَفِيفُ الْمَحْمِلِ طَيِّبُ الرِّيحِ

"Anyone offered *Rayḥān* (basil perfume) should not refuse it. It is light in weight and fragrant in scent." (*Saḥīḥ Muslim* 2253)

It is recommended for men to use perfume when attending public gatherings, particularly for Friday and *'Id* prayers, as authentically established from many Prophetic narrations. This allows a Muslim to benefit others by his pleasant fragrance, and it is in this context that applying perfume is considered an act of charity.

Naturally, perfume has a major role to play in the sexual activity. A pleasant smell arouses sexual instinct and increases pleasure and performance. As such, the wife should endeavour to apply perfume as part of her adornment for sexual relations with her husband. She should choose a perfume that is best suited for her and likely to please her husband. It will also help remove any bad odour she may have on her body or clothes.

However, two points are worth considering here:

Firstly, it is permitted to use mainstream perfumes, deodorants and creams even if they contain alcohol, because the alcohol contained in them is from other than grapes, dates and barley. In many products, synthetic alcohol formulated from chemical substances is used which, according to the *fatwa* position in the Hanafī School, is not impure (*najis*). It is more precautionary, however, to avoid using such perfumes, because of everything negative that the fashion and cosmetic industries represent, and also to avoid the genuine difference of opinion of those who regard synthetic alcohol to be impure. (See: *Takmila Fath al-Mulhim bi Sharh Saḥīḥ Muslim* 3:342-343)

Certain perfumes do contain alcohol that is derived from grapes and dates, such as Ethyl alcohol, thus making the perfume unlawful to use. Other names given to Ethyl Alcohol are: Ethanol and Methylated Spirits. Products containing these ingredients are therefore prohibited.

Secondly, it is not permitted for women to go out wearing perfume, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ firmly forbade it in rigorously authenticated (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīths. Sayyiduna Abū Mūsā ؓ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

إِنْ اسْتَعْطَرَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ فَمَرَّتْ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ لِيَجِدُوا رِيحَهَا فَهِيَ كَذَا وَكَذَا ، قَالَ قَوْلًا شَدِيدًا

"If a woman wore perfume and passed by a group [of men], and they smelt her perfume, she is such and such." The narrator says, "He ﷺ used stern words." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4170)

As such, the wife should only wear perfume when she is inside of her home, and must ensure that she washes it away before going out.

d) Adornment and beautification can also entail the wife wearing gold, silver and other types of jewellery, and applying make-up to the face and applying lipstick. It is superior for her to apply *henna* to the hands and feet, and *kohl* to the eyes if she so desires, since they have been specifically permitted through the Sunna. She should also adorn her hair by regularly combing, arranging and taking care of it. Dyeing the hair is also permitted provided the ingredients used in the dye are *ḥalāl*. The explanation given above on mainstream perfumes and deodorants will also apply to hair-dyes.

It can be seen from the above that Islam generally does not lay too many restrictions when it comes to a woman adorning herself for her husband. After all, adornment is a means of both the husband and wife maintaining their chastity and staying away from the unlawful.

However, certain so-called means of adornment that distort one's image are prohibited, even if done for the husband. These include cosmetic surgery for the purpose of beautification, shaping eyebrows, wearing tattoos, piercing the body other than the ears and nose, and wearing hair extensions and wigs made out of human hair. As such, these things must be avoided.

e) Part of a woman's adornment for her husband is also keeping fit, in shape and healthy. The wife should look after her body-figure and maintain its beauty as much as possible. Not only will this be a means of her husband being attracted to her body, it will also help her remain healthy.

3) Feminine Behaviour

As part of her psychological preparation for sexual relations, a woman must realise that what attracts her husband towards her is her softness,

gentleness and generally her feminine behaviour, and that roughness and masculine traits are normally a "turn off" for men.[4]

Allah Most High has created a natural attraction and charm in a woman's voice that is capable of sexually arousing a man. This is a reality which cannot be denied. Many psychologists also agree, stressing that the voice of an individual plays a great role in arousing sexual desires.

This is the reason why Allah Most High commanded the wives of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in particular, and all Muslim women in general, to abstain from conversing with non-mahram men in a soft and sweet tone. Allah Most High says:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا

"O wives of the Prophet! You are not like other women, if you are God-fearing. So do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having a disease in his heart should be moved with desire." (Qur'ān 33:32)

The above verse commands women not to speak too softly with non-*mahram* men, and when talking to them, both the content and manner of conversation must be appropriate and free of anything inciting. This is because conversing with a member of the opposite sex in a soft, provocative and flirty way is a means of falling into something unlawful, and as such, the means itself has also been prohibited.

As such, the husband will be significantly drawn towards his wife through her softness and feminine behaviour.

While the guidance mentioned above is applicable for all times, it is even more essential when the couple intend to engage in sexual relations. In order to set the mood and an atmosphere of romance, the wife should use various ways and means of seducing her husband. She may flirt, talk and behave amorously in order to arouse her husband's sexual interest, avoiding anything that may be distasteful or a "turn off". In this way, the scene will be set for a passionate and enjoyable session of husband-wife union, *In shā' Allāh*.

4 The renowned Hadith master (ḥāfiẓ) and Hanafi jurist Imam Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī, in his commentary of the hadith in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed men who assume the traits of women, and women who assume the traits of men (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5547), explains that assuming the traits of the opposite gender is done intentionally and unintentionally. The blame and curse in the hadith is only when it is intentional. (*'Umdat al-Qārī Sharh Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 15:85)

PREPARATION OF THE HUSBAND

What has been mentioned above in regard to a wife's psychological and physical preparation also applies to the husband, with the obvious exception of those matters that were directed exclusively to the wife. As such, the husband should also take note of the general guidance outlined above, for Allah Most High says:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

> "And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them." (Qur'ān 2:228)

Nevertheless, certain specific issues need to be addressed and examined from the point of view of the husband also:

(1) Cleanliness and Personal Hygiene

A husband is seriously mistaken if he thinks that his wife will be sexually attracted to him at all costs, even if he is in a dirty, unkempt state, giving off bad odours from his mouth and body. A woman is a sentient creature with feelings and sensitivities even more delicate than that of a man. At times, she may only be prevented by bashfulness from making her feelings known to her husband. As such, the husband must ensure that he takes the means to keep himself clean and hygienic.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the purest of the people. He warned husbands of the detrimental consequences of not remaining clean. Sayyidunā 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اغسلوا ثيابكم وخذوا من شعوركم واستاكوا وتزينوا وتنظفوا فإن بني إسرائيل لم يكونوا يفعلون كذلك فزنت نساؤهم

> "Wash your clothes, take care of your hair, use the *siwāk*, adorn yourselves and remain clean. For the Children of Israel would not do this, hence their women committed adultery." (*Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa'l-Af'āl* 17175)

Furthermore, 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ؓ says, "I love to adorn myself for my wife as much as I wish her to adorn herself for me." (*Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* P: 142)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned ten matters from the pure,

primordial and natural disposition of a man known as *fitra*, which are from the ways of all the Prophets of Allah, particularly Sayyiduna Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him), and sound human nature is naturally inclined towards them. Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﵂ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

عَشْرٌ مِنَ الْفِطْرَةِ: قَصُّ الشَّارِبِ، وَإِعْفَاءُ اللِّحْيَةِ، وَالسِّوَاكُ، وَاسْتِنْشَاقُ الْمَاءِ، وَقَصُّ الأَظْفَارِ، وَغَسْلُ الْبَرَاجِمِ، وَنَتْفُ الإِبِطِ، وَحَلْقُ الْعَانَةِ، وَانْتِقَاصُ الْمَاءِ. قَالَ زَكَرِيَّاءُ: قَالَ مُصْعَبٌ: وَنَسِيتُ الْعَاشِرَةَ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَكُونَ الْمَضْمَضَةَ

"Ten matters are from upright natural disposition (*fitra*): Trimming the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the tooth-stick, rinsing the nose, cutting the nails, washing the joints, plucking the hair under the armpits, shaving the pubic hair and cleaning one's private parts with water (*istinja*)." The narrator said, "I have forgotten the tenth, but it may have been rinsing the mouth." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 261, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 53, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2757, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* 9286 and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 293)

As such, in terms of personal hygiene, the husband should keep the following points in mind:

a) The husband should ensure that he remains clean by avoiding dirt, filth and bad odour. After relieving himself, he should clean his genital area properly with water (*istinja*). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ included *istinja* amongst the ten matters of upright natural disposition (*fitra*), as mentioned earlier.

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﵂, addressing Muslim women, said:

مُرْنَ أَزْوَاجَكُنَّ أَنْ يَسْتَطِيبُوا بِالْمَاءِ فَإِنِّي أَسْتَحْيِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَفْعَلُهُ

"Tell your husbands to wash their private parts with water, for I am too shy to tell them so. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to do that." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 19)

The hands should be washed thoroughly after one relieves oneself, preferably using soap until all traces of ritual impurity (*najāsa*) are

removed. After urinating, a man is required to ensure that drops of urine are completely removed from his urine passage (*istibra'*).

b) The husband should make sure that he avoids anything that causes distaste or is a "turn off" for his wife. He should take special care that he does not have bad breath or body odour.

In order to remove bad body odour, the husband should have regular baths, especially when intending to have sexual relations with his wife. Applying perfume (*'iṭr*) is a Sunna of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ and it should not be neglected. There are many natural scents that can be used, such as *Musk*, *Ambar* and *Oud*. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, "Musk is the most pleasant of scents." (*Sahih Muslim* 2252) One may also use mainstream deodorants and body-sprays, provided they are *halāl*.

Likewise, in order to remove bad odours from the mouth, the husband should brush his mouth and teeth thoroughly. Mouth rinsing (*madhmadha*) is one of the ten matters of natural disposition (*fiṭra*). The mouth should be washed in order to remove all traces of food that stick to the teeth and damage them. A mouthwash may be used provided it contains no *harām* ingredients. Using the *siwāk* was also mentioned as one of the ten matters of *fiṭra*.

Sayyiduna Hudhayfa رضي الله عنه relates:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا قَامَ لِيَتَهَجَّدَ يَشُوصُ فَاهُ بِالسِّوَاكِ

> "Whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ got up [for prayers] at night, he would clean his mouth rigorously with the *siwāk*."
> (*Sahīh Muslim* 255)

Imam Nawawī, in his commentary of *Sahīh Muslim*, states that using the *siwāk* to brush the mouth and teeth is recommended at all times, but especially so when one has a bad odour of the mouth. He states that bad odour of the mouth has many causes, including abstaining from eating and drinking, consuming something that has an offensive smell to it, prolonged silence and talking too much. (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim* P: 334)

Ensuring that the mouth is clean and fresh is extremely important when the couple intend on having sexual relations. Surely, it is wrong for the husband to kiss his wife passionately without having washed his mouth and brushed his teeth properly. Smokers and anyone who habitually consumes distasteful things should take extra precautions, as it can kill the passion and desire of the spouse.

e) The husband should also pay attention to his attire and external appearance by dressing neatly and wearing clean and ironed clothes, for Allah Most High is beautiful and likes beauty. He should change his clothes regularly and keep them neat and tidy. It is surely wrong for the husband to walk around in filthy and unwashed clothes. Some husbands fail to give due importance to this and engage in sexual relations with their wives even in their work-clothes! Not only is this a "turn off" for the wife, it also reflects selfishness on the part of the husband.

Sayyiduna Jābir ibn 'Abdullah ﷺ relates:

وَرَأَى رَجُلاً آخَرَ وَعَلَيْهِ ثِيَابٌ وَسِخَةٌ فَقَالَ: أَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا يَجِدُ مَا يَغْسِلُ بِهِ ثَوْبَهُ؟

"...And he (the Messenger of Allah ﷺ) saw another man wearing dirty clothes and said, "Could this man not find something to wash his garments with?" (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4059)

Sayyiduna Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ said to Sahl Ibn al-Hanzaliyya ﷺ, recorded by Imam Abū Dāwūd in his *Sunan* as part of a long hadith, "... [Tell us] a word which benefits us and does not harm you." He said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

إِنَّكُمْ قَادِمُونَ عَلَى إِخْوَانِكُمْ ، فَأَصْلِحُوا رِحَالَكُمْ وَأَصْلِحُوا لِبَاسَكُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَأَنَّكُمْ
شَامَةٌ فِي النَّاسِ ، فَإِنَّ اللهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُحْشَ وَلَا التَّفَحُّشَ

"You are on your way to meet your brothers, so fix your saddles and tidy your dresses, until you appear distinct among people as a beauty mark [on a beautiful face]. Allah does not like roughness and rough manners." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4086 & *Musnad Ahmad* 4:180)

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ كِبْرٍ ، قَالَ رَجُلٌ: إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ ثَوْبُهُ
حَسَنًا وَنَعْلُهُ حَسَنَةً ، قَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ ، الْكِبْرُ بَطَرُ الْحَقِّ وَغَمْطُ النَّاسِ

"He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise." A man asked, "A person may like his dress to be nice, and his shoes to be nice. He ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride is to reject the truth [out of arrogance] and have contempt for the people." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 91)

As such, the Sunna is to remain clean, wearing neat clothing and smelling good. A man should dress neatly, even with friends and relatives. His attire should be clean and elegant, not ugly and unsightly. If he looks good in clean clothes, he will be pleasant to look at and people will enjoy his presence. If he is the opposite, people will look down upon him and not give him any importance. This is even more important where a husband-wife relationship is concerned.

Imam Ibn al-Jawzi states in his *Sayd al-Khāṭir* that staying filthy is a cause of the wife disliking her husband. She may feel uncomfortable discussing it with her husband, but it will result in her losing interest in him. In remaining clean and pure, the wife will be drawn towards her husband. Women are but sisters (or the other half) of men (*shaqā'iq*), and just as a husband may dislike something of her, she too may dislike something of him. (*Sayd al-Khāṭir* P: 141 & 142)

d) Keeping the hair, whether it is the hair of the head or the beard, clean and neat is also important. The husband should oil and comb his hair. If he is unable to maintain the hair of his head properly, he should have it trimmed or shaved. The beard should be combed, kept neat, and oiled if possible.

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﵁ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ شَعْرٌ فَلْيُكْرِمْهُ

"He who has hair should take care of it." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4160)

Sayyiduna Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ﵁ relates:

أَتَانَا رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَرَأَى رَجُلًا شَعِثًا قَدْ تَفَرَّقَ شَعْرُهُ فَقَالَ : أَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا يَجِدُ مَا يُسَكِّنُ بِهِ شَعْرَهُ؟

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to us, and saw a dishevelled man whose hair was disordered. So he said, "Could this man not find something to arrange his hair with?" (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4059)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would also look after the hair of his head and beard. Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mālik ﵁ relates:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُكْثِرُ دَهْنَ رَأْسِهِ وَتَسْرِيحَ لِحْيَتِهِ ، وَيُكْثِرُ الْقِنَاعَ حَتَّى كَأَنَّ ثَوْبَهُ ثَوْبُ زَيَّاتٍ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would often oil his hair, comb his beard and frequently use *Qinā'* [a cloth placed on the head to wipe off and absorb oil], so much so that his cloth was similar to the cloth of an oil-seller." (*Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī* 33)

It is also permissible, rather recommended, for a man to dye the hair of his head and beard, provided the ingredients used in the hair-dye are *halāl*. The best form of hair dye to be applied to the head or beard is *henna*. Sayyiduna Abū Dhar ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ أَحْسَنَ مَا غُيِّرَ بِهِ الشَّيْبُ الْحِنَّاءُ وَالْكَتَمُ

"The best dye to change [one's] old age (grey hair), is *henna* (a red plant dye) and *katm* (a type of grass)." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1753 & others)

However, using *pure* black hair-dye is not permitted or at the least disliked according to most Hanafī and Shāfi'ī jurists (*fuqahā'*), even for the purpose of adorning oneself for one's wife. (*Radd al-Muhtār* and *Al-Majmū'*) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

وَاجْتَنِبُوا السَّوَادَ

"...Abstain from using black dye." (*Sahīh Muslim* 2102)

The hair which grows on the cheeks or throat of a man is not considered to be part of his beard, for a beard is that which grows on the jawbone. As such, it is permitted for a man to remove hair from the cheeks by shaving or trimming it. (*Radd al-Muhtār* 6:407 and *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 5:358)

The husband should also ensure that he shaves or at least trims his moustache. In the hadīth quoted earlier regarding the ten matters of *Fitra*, "trimming the moustache" was also included. As such, shortening the moustache is an agreed upon Sunna, and to keep the moustache long to the point that it covers the top of the upper lip is blameworthy. It is considered to be unhygienic because food and other undesirable things are likely to get stuck in such a moustache. This becomes more important for a husband, since a long moustache may prove to be uncomfortable, to say the least, when couples kiss one another.

After agreeing that a man must shorten his moustache, scholars

have disagreed about the extent to which the moustache should be trimmed. Is it better to completely remove one's moustache, or is it enough to shorten the moustache such that it no longer covers the top of the upper lip? This difference of opinion stems from the fact that the ḥadīths of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ mention two things. Some mention "Shortening the moustache" whilst others mention "Removing the moustache".

From the Ḥanafī School, Imam Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī explains in his *Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Āthār* that it is recommended (*mustaḥab*) to shave the moustache completely, and this is better than shortening it, affirming that this was the position of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and both his main students. He also reports, with his authentic chains of transmission, that this was the practice of great Companions, including 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Abū Hurayra, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Abū Usayd al-Sa'idī, Rāfi' ibn Khadīj, Jābir ibn Abdillāh, Anas ibn Mālik, and others ﷺ. (*Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Āthār* 4:230-231)

Imam Bukhārī reports that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ used to trim his moustache so short that the whiteness of his skin could be seen. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5:2208)

According to Imam Mālik, it is detested to shave the moustache completely; rather the Sunna is to shorten the moustache such that it does not cover the top of the upper lip. (*Muwaṭṭa' Mālik* 2:507)

Imam Nawawī of the Shāfi'ī School states that the Sunna is to trim the moustache from above the upper lip, without shaving the moustache completely. (*Al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* 1:159)

In the Ḥanbalī School, both shaving the moustache completely and shortening it are from the Sunna. As such, a man can choose between shaving his moustache completely and trimming it without shaving. (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zād al-Ma'ād* 1:178)

Regardless of this minor difference of opinion between the various jurists (*fuqahā'*), what is clear is that all the jurists are unanimous on the impermissibility of keeping one's moustache long to the point that it covers one's upper lip. This is so because Zayd ibn Arqam ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ مِنْ شَارِبِهِ فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا

"Whosoever does not take from his moustache is not one of us." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2761 and *Musnad Aḥmad*. Imam Tirmidhī said that this is a rigorously authenticated ḥadīth)

Those who have a habit of keeping long moustaches must take heed from this. It is wrong to leave the moustaches long and thick, since the warning in the Prophetic hadith is quite stern. Not only is shortening the moustache the way of the Prophets, it also helps maintain one's beauty and elegance.

Finally, the extended parts of the moustache, i.e. the hair between the moustache and the beard, are considered part of the moustache, and thus it is permitted to remove them. There is also nothing wrong in leaving this hair untrimmed. (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya*, 5:358)

c) The husband should also make sure that he removes his pubic and underarm hair regularly. Untrimmed hair in the pubic area and armpits is a cause of bad body odour, as dirt and sweat may gather there. Removing underarm hair and shaving pubic hair are both included in the ten matters of *fiṭra*. As such, it is disliked to leave hair on these areas to the point that the hair becomes long.

It is recommended to remove the pubic and armpit hair weekly, ideally on a Friday. It is not disliked to delay this to two weeks. However, it is blameworthy beyond that, and sinful beyond forty days. (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 5:357-358)

In a similar manner, the husband should clip his nails and not let them grow too long, given that dirt is easily gathered under the nails. Clipping the nails is also from the matters of *fiṭra*. As such, it is blameworthy to leave the nails uncut beyond two weeks, and sinful beyond forty days. (Ibid)

Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ relates:

وَقَّتَ لَنَا فِي قَصِّ الشَّارِبِ وَتَقْلِيمِ الأَظْفَارِ وَنَتْفِ الإِبِطِ وَحَلْقِ الْعَانَةِ أَنْ لا نَتْرُكَ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً

"A time-limit was prescribed for us [by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ] for shortening the moustache, clipping the nails, plucking armpit hair and shaving the pubic hair, that it should not be left for more than forty nights." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 258)

2) Good Treatment and Seduction

A very important aspect of a husband's psychological preparation is preceding sexual relations with good treatment, kind words, playfulness and affection. Islam generally commands the husband to treat his wife honourably at all times, let alone when the couple intend on engaging in sexual relations. Allah Most High says:

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِن كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

"Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good." (Qur'ān 4:19)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ emphasised, both verbally and in action, the importance of treating one's wife kindly. Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخِيَارُكُمْ خِيَارُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ خُلُقًا

"The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. And the best of you are those who are the best to their women." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1162 with a rigorously authenticated chain of transmission)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a living example of how a husband should treat his wife. He was extremely gentle and kind toward his wives, and treated them in an amicable manner. He was affectionate, humorous and considerate towards them. Many examples of the Messenger of Allah's ﷺ treatment of his wives can be found in the books of Prophetic narrations.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي

"The best among you is the one who is best to his family. And I am the best among you to my family." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1977)

As such, treating one's wife kindly is a general ruling of Islam, and is essential when one intends to have sexual relations. How a couple treat one another outside the bedroom will have a direct impact on their bedroom behaviour.

To set the scene, the husband should be gentle and affectionate, expressing his love for her with words that will seduce her. He should remember that women get "turned on" by what is said and the meaning behind the words. It is all about how his words make her feel. It's a set

of actions, and every small thing the husband does matters, and will help contribute to a healthy sexual encounter.

There is a subtle indication of this in the Qur'ān also. Allah Most High says:

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

"Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish, but do some good act for yourselves beforehand; and fear Allah." (Qur'ān 2:223)

Some exegetes of the Qur'ān say that the phrase "but do some good act for yourselves beforehand" refers to the importance of things that come before sex itself, such as having a correct intention, reciting the appropriate *Du'ā*, and foreplay in increasing interest and making the matter easier. (*Tafsīr Abī al-Sa'ūd* 1:223 and *Tafsīr al-Kasshāf* 1:294)

In a hadīth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ describes how disgraceful it is for a husband to treat his wife cruelly and then have sex with her. He ﷺ said:

يَعْمِدُ أَحَدُكُمْ يَجْلِدُ امْرَأَتَهُ جَلْدَ الْعَبْدِ، فَلَعَلَّهُ يُضَاجِعُهَا مِنْ آخِرِ يَوْمِهِ

"...One of you beats his wife as he would beat a slave, and then he may have sex with her in the evening!" (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 4658 and *Sahīh Muslim*2855, the wording is of *Bukhārī*.)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is displaying astonishment at a man who mistreats his wife and then has the audacity to engage in sexual relations with her. This is why in another narration he said:

بِمَ يَضْرِبُ أَحَدُكُمُ امْرَأَتَهُ ضَرْبَ الْفَحْلِ ثُمَّ لَعَلَّهُ يُعَانِقُهَا

"How can one of you beat his wife like a stallion is beaten and then sleep with her?" (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 5695) In other words, how can a husband treat his wife harshly and aggressively and then expect her to be responsive to his sexual advances?

Muslim husbands really must take heed of this. Some men, outside of the bedroom, fail to treat their women with warmth and affection, but when it comes to sex, all of a sudden, they become caring and

compassionate. Not only is this selfish, it also shows what the wife actually means to the husband.

The Sunna is to precede sexual relations with tenderness and affection. The husband should use the appropriate means to seduce his wife, through his words and actions. In this way, the wife will also be extremely receptive to his sexual advances.

- 6 -

FOREPLAY

ONCE A COUPLE are psychologically and physically prepared and in the mood for sex, the union should begin with foreplay. Foreplay comprises all the sexual activity that precedes actual penetration. Verbal expressions of love and desire that the couple exchange between each other are included in this; however, this section will only examine the physical aspects of foreplay.

IMPORTANCE OF FOREPLAY

Engaging in foreplay is immensely important and a vital constituent of a happy marriage, and as a consequence, it should never be disregarded. Both spouses should take the means to arouse one another, as it will result in a more pleasurable union.

Although foreplay is important for both spouses, it is of greater importance for the husband to sexually arouse his wife before having sex. Women generally take longer to become fully sexually aroused. If the husband has sex with her when she is unprepared, he may fulfil his need, but not hers. This will result in the wife becoming frustrated and is detrimental to the marriage.

The husband should take his time in arousing his wife. Only when he sees that she is ready, prepared, and desirous of him, should he engage in having sex. It is egotism on the husband's part to fulfil his own sexual need and leave his wife unsatisfied and discontented. Husbands like this do not truly love their wives, but are only concerned about their own gratification.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also encouraged foreplay between the spouses. Sayyiduna Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh ؓ relates:

كُنْتُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي غَزَاةٍ ... قَالَ: تَزَوَّجْتَ؟ قُلْتُ: نَعَمْ ، قَالَ: بِكْرًا أَمْ ثَيِّبًا؟ قُلْتُ: بَلْ ثَيِّبًا ، قَالَ: أَفَلَا جَارِيَةً تُلَاعِبُهَا وَتُلَاعِبُكَ ....

"I was in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a battle ... The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said [to me], "Did you marry?" I answered, "Yes." He said, "A virgin or a non-virgin?" I said, "A non-virgin." He said, "Why not a virgin so that you may play with her and she may play with you?..." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1991)[1]

Imam Tirmidhī reports with his own chain of transmission to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said:

كُلُّ مَا يَلْهُو بِهِ الرَّجُلُ الْمُسْلِمُ بَاطِلٌ إِلَّا رَمْيَهُ بِقَوْسِهِ وَتَأْدِيبَهُ فَرَسَهُ وَمُلَاعَبَتَهُ أَهْلَهُ فَإِنَّهُنَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

"...Every game a Muslim plays is futile (*bāṭil*) except for archery, training one's horse and playing with one's wife, for they are from praiseworthy acts." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1637, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 2811 and *Musnad Aḥmad* 17433, the wording is of *Tirmidhī*)

Imam Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and Imam Daylamī in his *Musnad al-Firdaws* both record a narration on the authority of Sayyiduna Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, "None of you should come onto his wife like an animal; but rather there should be between them a messenger. It was said, "What is the messenger O Prophet of Allah? He replied, "[Foreplay of] kissing and words." (*Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:175, with a weak chain of transmission)

1. This hadith does not in any way conclude that one should not marry non-virgins. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself married many non-virgin women. His beloved first wife Sayyida Khadija ﷺ was not only a non-virgin, but much older than him too. As such, there is nothing wrong whatsoever Islamically in marrying non-virgin women and widows. In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was addressing the issue from another angle. This is why, in the narration of *Sahīh Muslim* (715), Sayyiduna Jābir ﷺ said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "I have sisters; so I was afraid that she [a non-virgin woman] might come between me and them, whereupon he ﷺ said, "Well and good, if that is so. A woman is married for her religion, her wealth and her beauty. So you should choose one with religion, may your hands cleave to dust."

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya mentions that Sayyidna Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh ﷺ is reported to have said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade from engaging in sex before foreplay." (*Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* P: 181, with a weak chain of transmission)

Imam Ibn Qudāma, the renowned Hanbalī jurist, mentions a narration in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, "Do not begin intercourse until she has experienced desire like the desire you experience, lest you fulfil your desires before she does." (*Al-Mughnī* 8:136)

The above few narrations express the importance of foreplay between the spouses. Not only did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ encourage foreplay, but he engaged in it with his wives, as it will become evident from some of the narrations mentioned later.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim states that foreplay with the wife should precede sex - foreplay through kissing and sucking on her tongue, for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would engage in foreplay with his wife and kiss her. (*Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* P: 180)

Imam Munawī states, "Foreplay and passionate kissing before sex is an emphatic *Sunna* (*sunna mu'akkada*), and it is disliked (*makrūh*) to do otherwise." (*Fayd al-Qadīr Sharh al-Jamī' al-Saghīr* 5:115)

Some regard practices associated with foreplay to be inappropriate and contrary to religious propriety. For them, it is piety to abstain from these activities, but this is completely erroneous, for who can possibly be more pious, pure and God-fearing than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? Yet not only did he encourage foreplay, but he engaged in it with his wives. Abstinence from such activities is not a sign of piety, as there is no monasticism (*rahbāniyya*) in Islam. Islam is a practical religion which allows its followers to fulfil their sexual needs in a lawful manner.

Foreplay can take many forms, and it is best left to the couple to discover what stimulates them, since each couple is different. The prohibited acts, however, must be avoided. Nevertheless, some general guidelines are presented here:

1) Kissing

a) Kissing one's spouse is an essential part of foreplay and a *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَبَّلَ بَعْضَ نِسَائِهِ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَلَمْ يَتَوَضَّأْ قَالَ قُلْتُ مَنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَنْتِ قَالَ فَضَحِكَتْ

> "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ kissed one of his wives and then left for prayer without performing ablution." Urwa [the narrator from Ā'isha] says, "I asked 'Ā'isha, "It must have been you?" [Upon hearing this] 'Ā'isha smiled." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 86, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 181 and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* 170)

This hadīth indicates that kissing one's spouse is recommended, and it demonstrates the importance of kissing one's wife whenever one enters or leaves the house. This was the *Sunna* of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and it is inappropriate for a man to leave his house without greeting his wife affectionately with kisses or to return home questioning first whether the food is ready, or whether someone had called!

Passionate kissing (or French kissing) is also a *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Sayyida 'Ā'isha رضي الله عنها relates that,

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يُقَبِّلُهَا وَهُوَ صَائِمٌ وَيَمُصُّ لِسَانَهَا

> "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would kiss her whilst he was fasting, and he would suck on her tongue." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 2378)[1]

In this way, both spouses should kiss each other passionately during foreplay, and there is nothing wrong if saliva is exchanged. Licking or sucking each other's tongues is not only allowed, but a *Sunna* of the beloved of Allah ﷺ. One may also suck the lower or upper lip of one's spouse. Biting softly on the lip is also allowed, provided the spouse is not hurt or harmed by it.

b) Kissing is not restricted to the lips and mouth. One may also kiss other parts of the body such as the cheeks, forehead, tip of the nose,

1. Note that according to the Hanafī and most other jurists, kissing one's spouse passionately to the point that it results in the exchange of saliva invalidates one's fast, necessitating both a make-up (*qadā'*) fast and expiation (*kaffāra*). (*Marāqī al-Falāḥ* P. 667)

As far as this hadith is concerned, in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ kissed his wife passionately whilst fasting, scholars explain that, firstly, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would ensure not to swallow her saliva. The sucking on the tongue was very restrained and not to the point where saliva was exchanged and swallowed. Secondly, it is possible to interpret it, so that sucking on the tongue is not connected to fasting. As such, the meaning of the hadith is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would kiss Sayyida 'Ā'isha رضي الله عنها whilst he was fasting, and normally when he kissed her, he would kiss her passionately and suck on her tongue (but not necessarily whilst fasting). (See: Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī* 4:195 and Khalīl Ahmad Saharanpūrī, *Badhl al-Majhūd fī hāl Abī Dāwūd* 11:202-203)

behind the ear or suck on the earlobe, the eyelid, back of the neck, palm of the hand, fingers, wrist, forearm, waist, stomach, navel, chest and breast, spine, behind the knees, thighs and the leg. In other words, it is permitted to shower one's spouse with kisses all over. Just as kissing these body parts is permitted, it is likewise allowed to lick them.

As for the area close to the genitalia, one must ensure that no impurity comes into contact with the mouth, since consuming impurities is explicitly forbidden. It is best to avoid getting too close to the genital area with the mouth. This will be explained in more detail in the section pertaining to "oral sex" *In shā' Allāh.*

c) Biting or sucking hard on one's spouse's body can leave marks, or love bites, particularly on the neck. These bruises are the result of burst blood vessels beneath the skin and last between 4 to 5 days, depending on the individual.

From an Islamic perspective, public display of affection is not permitted. Likewise, anything that hints at a sexual encounter is frowned upon. Islam emphasises modesty and dignity, and prohibits acts that could lead to immorality.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed by a man of the *Anṣār* who was reprimanding his brother regarding shyness (*ḥayā'*), so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

دَعْهُ فَإِنَّ الْحَيَاءَ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

"Leave him, for modesty is from faith (*imān*)." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 24)

Sayyiduna Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ مِنْ أَشَرِّ النَّاسِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْزِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، الرَّجُلَ يُفْضِي إِلَى امْرَأَتِهِ وَتُفْضِي إِلَيْهِ ، ثُمَّ يَنْشُرُ سِرَّهَا

"The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1437)

Based on this, if a love bite is left on a part of the body that is normally covered, such as the stomach or back, then this is permitted. However, leaving a mark on an exposed area so that people can conclude what

took place between the spouses is not permitted. If a mark is left on the neck, proper care must be taken to cover it until the mark disappears. It is contrary to Islam to show off that their spouse left a mark on their body. This is unlawful behaviour.

d) Kissing, licking, sucking and generally fondling the wife's breasts is not only permitted, but is one of the most effective ways of sexually arousing her. As such, the husband should not neglect this.

However, according to the Hanafi School, contrary to some other Schools, a man is not permitted to drink his wife's milk, and it is sinful to do so intentionally. Imam Haskafi states, "It (milk) is a part of a human being and to make use of it without a real need to do so is unlawful." (*Radd al-Muhtār* 3:211)

This indicates that deriving benefit in any manner from a part of a human being without a genuine need is unlawful. The baby's drinking of the mother's milk is an exception, based on textual permission, due to the real need (*darura*) to do so.

Consequently, if the wife has milk in her breasts and it is feared that milk will enter the mouth, then the husband should avoid sucking on them. Whilst sucking, if milk does enter the mouth, it is necessary to spit it out straight away.

It is important to note that while it is unlawful to drink one's wife's milk intentionally, one's marriage is not affected by it. Some individuals mistakenly believe that drinking the wife's milk nullifies the marriage. The rulings of suckling (*radā'a*), which would entail the woman becoming a foster-mother, apply only to children who are breastfed in the period designated for it, and are of no significance after this.

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates:

دَخَلَ عَلَيَّ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَعِنْدِي رَجُلٌ ، قَالَ: يَا عَائِشَةُ مَنْ هَذَا؟
قُلْتُ: أَخِي مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ ، قَالَ: يَا عَائِشَةُ ، انْظُرْنَ مَنْ إِخْوَانُكُنَّ ، فَإِنَّمَا الرَّضَاعَةُ
مِنَ الْمَجَاعَةِ

"Once the Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered my house whilst a man was with me. He said, "O 'Ā'isha! Who is this?" I replied, "My foster-brother." He said, "O 'Ā'isha! Be careful in determining who your foster-brother is, for suckling is only valid if it takes place in the suckling period." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 2504 & *Sahīh Muslim* 1455; the wording is of *Bukhārī*)

Based on this hadith, all four *Sunni* schools of Islamic law agree that suckling and milk given to an adult is of no significance and does not establish anything. (*Al-Mughnī* 9:201-202)

Finally, the wife may also kiss and suck on her husband's chest and nipples. There is no Sharī'a restriction in this regard.

e) The question of eating or licking food off the spouse's body is often asked. There is no doubt that this practice is contrary to Islamic etiquettes, morality and religious propriety. Food should not be consumed directly with the mouth, but rather one should use one's hand. In addition, there are many etiquettes and *Sunnas* related to eating that cannot be fulfilled. Food is a blessing (*ni'ma*) from Allah Most High, and the Sharī'a prescribes many etiquettes when eating, such as uttering the name of Allah when starting, thanking Allah when finished, eating what is directly in front of one, eating with one's right hand, not eating whilst resting against something and so on.

As such, disrespecting food in any way, including placing it on the body especially close to places that may be impure, is contrary to Islamic teachings. One should avoid this practice altogether, since there are many other ways of enjoying foreplay that are in accordance with the etiquettes and noble manners of Islam.

2) Massaging and Caressing

a) As part of foreplay, both spouses should gently massage, caress and stroke each other's bodies, since this is an effective way of arousing sexual desires. One may stroke and sensually massage all areas of the body, including the hands, shoulders, back, stomach, thighs, legs and the feet. This may be done with a lubricant such as oil or talc.

In a hadith recorded by Shaykh 'Alī al-Muttaqī al-Hindī in his *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

إن الرجل إذا نظر إلى امرأته ونظرت إليه نظر الله تعالى إليهما نظرة رحمة ، فإذا أخذ بكفها تساقطت ذنوبهما من خلال أصابعهما

"When a man glances at his wife and she glances at him [with love and affection], Allah Most High looks at them with mercy. When he holds her hand [with love and affection], their sins fall from the gaps between their fingers." (*Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa'l-Af'āl* 44437 with a weak chain of transmission)

Both spouses should explore each other's "erogenous zones", areas of heightened sexual sensitivity in the body. The location of these areas varies with the individual and can include any part of the body, but there are common erogenous zones that exist in most people. The penis in men and the clitoris in women are both sensitive erogenous zones.

Areas of heightened sensitivity include the ears, the nape, the breasts and nipples, the inside of the thighs, behind the knees, the buttocks, the soles of the feet, toes and obviously the male and female genital areas. One should gently massage and stroke these areas to sexually arouse one's spouse. Be mindful that giving pleasure to one's spouse is an act of virtue, for which one will be rewarded, *In shā' Allāh*.

b) There is nothing wrong in touching, stroking and fondling the genitals of one's spouse. In fact, as part of foreplay, it is encouraged to stroke and play with each other's private parts. The wife may stroke her husband's penis, while the husband may fondle her vagina. It is an effective means of preparing one's spouse for sexual intercourse. In this regard, it is important to stimulate the woman's clitoris, a small sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals at the front of the vagina, as this will result in a more profound sexual response.

It is stated in *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya*, a renowned Ḥanafī Fiqh reference work, that Imam Abū Yūsuf said, "I asked Imam Abū Ḥanīfa regarding a man who strokes his wife's vagina and she strokes his penis in order that he get an erection, do you see any wrong in that?" He replied, "No, rather I am confident that one will be rewarded for doing so." (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 5:328. The same has been recorded by Imam Khatīb al-Shirbīnī of the Shāfi'ī School in his *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 3:181)

c) Moreover, it is permissible for the husband to use his hands and fingers to make his wife reach orgasm, and likewise the wife to use her hands to masturbate her husband. It is particularly encouraged for the husband to practise this on his wife, since women take longer to reach an orgasm.

The renowned Ḥanafī jurist, Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn, clearly states the permissibility of mutual masturbation between the spouses in his *Radd al-Muḥtār*. He states quoting *Mi'rāj al-Dirāya*, "And it is permitted to masturbate with the hand of one's wife." (*Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 2:399)

Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn details the difference between this and masturbating with one's own hand, which is clearly forbidden. In the former

case, one is satisfying oneself with that which is permissible to gain satisfaction from, namely a part of one's spouse, and one is entitled to seek sexual satisfaction from her entire body, whereas in the latter case, one is not. He notes that the prohibition of masturbating with one's own hand likewise applies to masturbating with one's own thighs, a wall or any other object. (Ibid)

In the chapter pertaining to legal punishments (*kitāb al-ḥudūd*), the author of the original work *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār* states, "If a man allows his wife to stroke his penis and he ejaculates, it is disliked but there is nothing on him." Commenting on this, Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn, explains that dislike here means "slightly disliked (*karāha tanzīh*)" without it being sinful, and then refers to what he discussed earlier in the chapter of fasting that it is permitted to masturbate with the hand of one's wife. (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 4:27)

Based on this reasoning and the explicit text mentioned above concerning the permissibility of a man masturbating with his wife's hand, it can be concluded that the reverse is also permissible, namely the wife masturbating with the husband's hand.

Imam Ghazālī of the Shāfi'ī School also permits the husband being masturbated with his wife's hands. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharh Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:179)

d) As for the spouses looking at each other's private parts, this is also, by and large, permitted in all Schools, though superior to avoid. Through the union of marriage, Sharī'a permits both the husband and wife to glance at any part of each other's bodies, which includes the private parts.

Sayyiduna Bahz ibn Hakīm ﷺ says that my father related to me from my grandfather [Mu'āwiya ibn Ḥayda], who said, "I said, O Messenger of Allah! Which of our nakedness is allowed to be exposed, and of which must we be careful?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

احْفَظْ عَوْرَتَكَ إِلَّا مِنْ زَوْجَتِكَ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ...

"Guard your nakedness (*awra*) except from your wife or your slave-woman..." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2769 and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1920)

Imam 'Abd al-Razzaq al-San'ānī in his *Al-Musannaf* and Imam Tabarānī in his *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* both record a ḥadīth related by Sa'd ibn Mas'ūd al-Kindī ﷺ who says:

أتى عثمان بن مظعون رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال : يارسول الله ! إني لأستحيي أن ترى أهلي عورتي . قال : ولم وقد جعلك الله لهم لباسا ، وجعلهم لك لباسا

'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn ﷺ came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I feel shy that my wife sees my nakedness (*awra*)." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Why should that be when Allah has made you a garment for them and them a garment for you. . ." (*Al-Muṣannaf* 6:85 and *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* 9:37)

Imam Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī of the Ḥanafī School states in his work *Al-Hidāya* that a man may look at the private parts of his wife since it is permitted for him to look at her whole body, with and without desire (*shahwa*). He mentions that this ruling is based on the hadith in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Lower your gaze except from your slave-woman and wife" and also on the fact that touching the wife's private parts and sex are both permitted, hence merely looking is even more worthy of being permitted. However, he says, it is superior for each of the spouses to avoid looking at the other's private parts. (*Al-Hidāya* 4:461)

It is stated in *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ would say, "It is better for the husband to look at his wife's private parts during sex, so that it helps in achieving full gratification." (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 5:328. Imam 'Aynī states that this report is not authentically established from Ibn 'Umar. See: *Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 6:367)

Imam Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī of the Shāfi'ī School also mentions the permissibility of looking at the spouse's private parts but mentions that it is disliked to do so without need. He then quotes Sayyida 'A'isha ﷺ who said, "I never saw the private parts of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he never saw mine." (Recorded by Ibn Mājah in his *Sunan* 1922, Imam Aḥmad in his *Musnad* and others)

He further states that the hadīth, "Looking at private parts may result in blindness" is deemed weak (da'īf) or fabricated (*mawḍū'*) by the scholars of ḥadīth, such as Imam Ibn Ḥibbān and Imam Ibn al-Jawzī." (*Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 3:181)

The Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools also agree with the Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī position on the permissibility of looking at the private parts of

one's spouse. (*Al-Mughnī* 7:458 for the Hanbalī School, and *Hāshiya al-Dusūqī 'ala'l-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* 2:341 for the Mālikī School)

e) Finally, it is permitted for both spouses to be completely naked. Shaykh Muḥammad Kan'ān, a contemporary scholar, writes in his book *Al-Mu'āshra al-Zawjiyya*, "It is inappropriate for a husband to have sex with his wife whilst they are both wearing clothes. Rather, it is better for both spouses to be naked before sex even if completely, for this is better for them [...]" (P: 64)

It is stated in *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* quoting Hanafī Scholars that it is allowed for the couple to be naked during sex if they are within their room [i.e. no one is able to see them]. (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 5:328)

Scholars mention, however, that the couple should place a cover or sheet over their naked bodies. Imam Ghazālī states, "The husband should place a sheet over himself and his wife." (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:174)

This is due to the ḥadīth recorded by Imam Ibn Mājah his *Sunan* from 'Utba ibn 'Abd al-Sulamī ﷺ who relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمْ أَهْلَهُ فَلْيَسْتَتِرْ وَلَا يَتَجَرَّدْ تَجَرُّدَ الْعَيْرَيْنِ

"When any of you has sex with the spouse, let him cover himself. One should not be completely naked like the nakedness of two wild asses [mating in public]." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1921)

The great ḥadīth master (*hāfiz*) Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (may Allah have mercy on him) states that this ḥadīth's chain of transmission (*isnād*) is weak and unreliable (*da'īf*). (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:175)

Another ḥadīth scholar Imam Munawī states, "The command of covering in this ḥadīth is one of recommendation (*istiḥbāb*), since by covering, one is showing respect to Allah Most High and the angels. However, if one does become naked, it is not unlawful, but rather somewhat disliked (*makrūh tanzīh*). (*Fayḍ al-Qadīr Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* 1:308)

In conclusion, it is somewhat disliked, although permitted, for a couple to be completely naked even without covering themselves with a sheet. However, if they were to cover themselves with a sheet, there would be nothing wrong whatsoever, even if they were to remove all of their clothes.

3) Body Contact

Part of foreplay is to have full-length, body-to-body contact, i.e. to hold the body of one's spouse full-length against oneself. This includes hugging, amorous caressing, cuddling, rolling around, taking one's spouse into one's arms, rubbing one's body against one's spouse and lying completely on top of one's spouse. This is permitted and encouraged, with or without clothes.

A question arises here about the permissibility of the husband rubbing his penis against his wife's thighs, stomach and other parts of the body to ejaculate, and likewise, the permissibility of the wife stroking her vagina against a part of her husband's body to reach an orgasm.

In light of the previous discussion on mutual masturbation, it is clear that this act is permitted for both spouses. Imam Ibn ʿĀbidīn in his *Radd al-Muḥtār* explains that rubbing the penis against the wife's thighs (*tafkhīdh*) or against her stomach (*tabṭīn*) to ejaculate are both permitted, although slightly disliked (*karāha tanzīhiyya*), because semen is wasted. (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 2:399 and 4:27)

The renowned jurist of the Indian Subcontinent, Shaykh Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ ʿUthmānī, states: "If one ejaculates by rubbing against the hands and other parts of the wife due to need, then this is permitted without even being disliked. Cases of need include the wife being on menstruation or postnatal bleeding and the husband has a need to fulfil his sexual desire. If this is done without need, then it is [still permitted but] slightly disliked." (*Imdād al-Muftīn* 2:585)

This returns us to the principle that the union of marriage allows each spouse to derive pleasure from the other. As such, it is permitted for either spouse to rub their private parts against the body of the other to reach an orgasm. However, it is superior to avoid this if there is no need for it. One must also remember that the means of stimulation must be one's spouse's body, and not self-stimulation, otherwise it will be considered unlawful masturbation.

OTHER CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF FOREPLAY

We have discussed the general Islamic guidelines concerning foreplay. However, there are new methods of foreplay and sexual stimulation, and it is important to understand the Islamic viewpoint concerning them.

1) Using Sex Aids and Toys

A sex aid is an object used to trigger or enhance sexual arousal or orgasm that a couple can use in masturbation or other sexual activity.

Some of the most common are dildos, vibrators, clitoral stimulators extension condoms, vaginal balls and various creams and lotions.

Among Muslim couples, the use of sex aids is an increasingly common method of enhancing sexual performance, but Islamically, certain things need to be considered.

a) The Sharī'a does not permit one to harm oneself. As such, if a sex aid harms either of the two spouses, it is not permitted to use it. It is necessary that the aid not cause any harm whatsoever to either spouse.

b) Certain aids are figures in the form of animate life. Such aids are not permitted to use, as picture making (*taṣwīr*) is unlawful.

c) Using lubricants, lotions, gels and creams is permitted, without dislike, provided they cause no harm.

d) Using an aid such as a vibrator to stimulate any part of the body except the private parts, or to stimulate the outer private parts of the wife, including her clitoris, is also permitted. The proviso here is that it must be used by one's spouse and not by the person themselves. To use such aids alone as a means of alleviating one's loneliness is sinful and would be considered a form of masturbation. As such, if it is feared that using aids with one's spouse would lead one into using them when alone, then they must be avoided.

e) Inserting a vibrator or a dildo into the inner-private parts of the wife for her to have an orgasm is not permitted, even if the husband uses it on her. Likewise, it is not permitted for the husband to use aids such as masturbators and realistic vaginas to ejaculate, even if he is accompanied by his wife. The Sharī'a allows the couple to derive benefit from any part of each other's bodies, as explained earlier, but does not permit them to masturbate in front of each other using another object. It is akin to a woman holding an object for her husband to masturbate with until he ejaculates. Clearly, this is not permitted.

Using sex aids can have adverse effects on the relationship. The man can become lazy, it may prevent husband-wife bonding that natural sexual relations provide, and it can cause the wife to consider her husband incapable of satisfying her naturally and lose respect for him. As such, it is best to avoid using sex aids altogether, whether the intention is to spice up one's relations or even to use it as a last resort.

2) Bondage and Flogging

Bondage is a sexual practice in which "pleasure" is gained by means of one partner being physically restrained or tied up. It can be a way of defining active and passive sexual roles. Restraints used include handcuffs, ropes, shackles, belts, chains, blindfolds and collars. Flogging is the act of whipping, spanking and generally inflicting pain on one's partner for sexual arousal.

Islamically, these acts are to be avoided as they go against sound human disposition (*fiṭra*). Islam instructs the husband to be extremely gentle and tender towards his wife, let alone inflict pain on her. The Mercy to both worlds ﷺ forbade men from being cruel to their wives and hurting them saying, "One of you beats his wife as he would beat a slave, and then he may have sex with her in the evening!" (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4658 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2855)

Moreover, the basis of marital relations is that they are to be lived "in a good way" (*bi'l-ma'rūf*), as Allah Most High tells us in the Qur'an. Each spouse strives to give the other their rights – including the fulfilment of their sexual needs – but within the boundaries of what can be considered to be "in a good way".

3) Showering with One's Spouse

It is permitted for a husband and wife to bathe and have a shower together as part of their intimacy and foreplay, because the spouses are allowed to look at each other's naked bodies, as discussed earlier.

It is established that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ bathed with his wives. Sayyida 'A'isha ؓ relates:

كُنْتُ أَغْتَسِلُ أَنَا وَالنَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ إِنَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ - تَخْتَلِفُ أَيْدِينَا فِيهِ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ and I used to take a bath from a single pot of water, and our hands used to go in the pot after each other in turn." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 258)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also reported to have bathed with Maymūna and Umm Salama ؓ. Imam Ṭaḥāwī (of the Hanafī School), Imam Qurṭubī (of the Mālikī School) and Imam Nawawī (of the Shāfi'ī School) all relate the agreement of the scholars on the permissibility of a man bathing together with his wife from a single pot. (*Al-Ta'līq al-Mumajjad 'alā Muwaṭṭa' Muḥammad* 1:142-244)

4) Sexually Provocative Dancing

As a general rule, dancing, sexually provocative or otherwise, is unlawful and sinful if accompanied by music. Listening to mainstream music is

decisively prohibited according to all four *Sunni* schools of Islamic law, and results in many personal and societal ills.

Musical instruments designed exclusively for entertainment and dancing, and which are capable of captivating the listener, even when unaccompanied by the human voice, such as the drum, violin, guitar, fiddle, flute, lute, mandolin, harmonium and piano, are all prohibited to use and listen to. The only exception is the *duff*, a plain tambourine without jingles attached to it. This has generally been unanimously agreed upon since the era of the Companions (*saḥāba*), their followers (*tabi'ūn*), jurists (*fuqahā'*) and scholars. (*Badā'i' al-Sanā'i'* 6:269, *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 4:429 and *Al-Mughnī* 12:39)

Sayyiduna Abū Mālik al-Ash'arī ﷺ relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

...لَيَكُونَنَّ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَقْوَامٌ يَسْتَحِلُّونَ الْحِرَ وَالْحَرِيرَ وَالْخَمْرَ وَالْمَعَازِفَ

> "There will appear people in my *Umma*, who will hold fornication, silk, alcohol and musical instruments to be lawful..." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 5268)

There are numerous ḥadīths about the prohibition of music. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, the Imam of the Shāfi'i school (may Allah have mercy on him), gathered all these ḥadīths, approximately forty, in his excellent work *Kaff al-Ra'a' an Muharramāt al-Lahu wa'l-Samā'*, and then said, "All of this is explicit and compelling textual evidence that musical instruments of all types are unlawful." (2:270)

As such, it is sinful for a wife to dance in any way to "music", since listening to music is prohibited. This prohibition remains, even if she is dancing for her husband's pleasure in the privacy of their own room.

As for dancing in front of one's spouse in private without music, this is allowed provided it is innocent and decent dancing (even if sensual or provocative), and not associated with the corrupt and immoral such as lap-dancing, pole-dancing and belly-dancing. A believer must avoid acts that are distinguishably those of the corrupt, immoral and shameless. (See: *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 4:573, *Radd al-Muḥtār* 4:259-260 and *Al-Fatāwa al-ḥadīthiyya* P: 298)

The ruling on the husband and wife dancing together is the same, in that if it is accompanied by music, it is unlawful, and permitted without music, provided one avoids imitating the lewdness of those corrupt and immoral.

5) Watching Pornography

Is it permitted for a couple to watch pornographic material to stimulate sexual arousal before sex? The answer to this question is an absolute and emphatic "no".

Pornography, whether in the form of motion picture films, movies, novels, plays, pictures or photographs, is without doubt unlawful, shameful and sinful. Islam clearly forbids looking at nudity or watching others have sex. Allah Most High says:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ

"Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts [...]" (Qur'ān 24:30-31)

In these verses, both men and women are ordered to lower their gazes to avoid seeing the nakedness of others. Even if one's gaze were to fall unintentionally on the nakedness of another, one would be required to look away instantaneously. Sayyiduna Jarīr ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ relates:

سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ نَظْرَةِ الْفَجْأَةِ فَأَمَرَنِي أَنْ أَصْرِفَ بَصَرِي

"I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about an accidental glance, and he commanded me to avert my gaze." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2159 & *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2776, the wording is of *Tirmidhī*)

Imam Nawawī, in his commentary of the above ḥadīth, says, "The meaning of an "accidental glance" is that a person's glance unintentionally falls upon a non-maḥram woman. There is no sin on him for the first glance, but he must avert his gaze immediately. If he averts his gaze immediately, then there is no sin on him, but if he continues looking, he will be sinful due to this ḥadīth, since the Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded the Companion to avert his gaze, and Allah Most High says, "Say to the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts." (*Al-Minhaj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* P: 1618)

Moreover, Sayyiduna Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لاَ يَنْظُرُ الرَّجُلُ إِلَى عَوْرَةِ الرَّجُلِ وَلاَ تَنْظُرُ الْمَرْأَةُ إِلَى عَوْرَةِ الْمَرْأَةِ

"A man must not look at the nakedness of another man, and a woman must not look at the nakedness of another woman..." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2793)

Jarhad al-Aslamī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed by him whilst his thigh was exposed. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

غَطِّ فَخِذَكَ فَإِنَّهَا مِنَ الْعَوْرَةِ

"Cover your thigh, for the thigh is from the nakedness [which must be concealed]." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2798)

Pornographic films do not help a couple's sex life, rather, they destroy it. Pornography is a highly addictive disease that leads invariably to the vice of self-abuse and masturbation. Watching nudity makes men and women incapable of being stimulated from one another naturally. They find it difficult to be aroused by their spouses, whilst they are easily aroused by pornography. This is why pornography is the most common cause for psychological impotence in the world. Muslim couples accustomed to pornography must realize that habitually watching porn will eventually lead to problems in their sex lives. As such, they must at once stop this disgraceful, perverted and immodest habit, if they are to have a prosperous martial life.

6) Cross-Dressing and Transvestism

Cross-dressing basically means dressing in the clothing, under-clothing and sometimes make-up associated with the opposite sex. If cross-dressing is for sexual reasons, it is called "transvestism". A transvestite derives sexual pleasure from dressing or masquerading in the clothing of the opposite sex. In most cases, the motivation behind transvestism is a form of fetishistic attraction to the clothing and accoutrements of the opposite sex, but it may also have to do with an attraction to the gender role of the opposite sex, symbolised by their clothes. As such, a husband who wears his wife's clothes or underwear, or a wife who dresses up in her husband's clothing or underwear is known as a transvestite.

There is no place for cross-dressing or transvestism in Islam. Playing the role, assuming the character-traits, and wearing the clothes of the opposite gender is severely frowned upon and cursed.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates:

لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ بِالنِّسَاءِ وَالْمُتَشَبِّهَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ بِالرِّجَالِ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed those men who imitate women and those women who imitate men." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 5546)

'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ also relates:

لَعَنَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمُخَنَّثِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالْمُتَرَجِّلَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَقَالَ: أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ ، قَالَ: فَأَخْرَجَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فُلَانًا وَأَخْرَجَ عُمَرُ فُلَانًا

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed effeminate men and masculine women, and said, "Throw them out of your houses." He [Ibn Abbās] said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ expelled so and so, and 'Umar expelled so and so." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 5547)

Sayyiduna Abū Ḥurayra ﷺ relates:

لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّجُلَ يَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَالْمَرْأَةَ تَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الرَّجُلِ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed the man who wears women's clothes, and the woman who wears men's clothes." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 4095)

Imam Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī states in his commentary of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* that it is unlawful for men to imitate women in their dress, adornment, manner of speech and body movements, and vice versa. As far as dress is concerned, he states, this depends on the customs of one's city. Some cultures may not distinguish between men and women's clothing but rather women are distinguished with their *ḥijāb* and outer cloak [as such, wearing such unisex clothing would be permitted]. As far as the manner of speech and body movements are concerned, only someone who does this deliberately is to be blamed; whilst someone who was created in such a manner is not to be blamed, but he is expected to gradually change his behaviour. If he fails to try and change himself, then he is to be blamed, especially if he is content with such behaviour. Yes, despite trying, if he is unable to change himself, then he is not to be blamed. (*Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 10:409)

It is clear from the above that it is sinful to intentionally dress like the opposite gender or to assume the character traits of the opposite gender. The evil of such behaviour affects both the individual and society at large, and is a rebellion against the natural ordering of things. There are men and there are women, and each gender has its distinctive characteristics. If men become effeminate and women masculinised, the natural order is reversed and will disintegrate.

Therefore, during sexual relations and foreplay, it is sinful for a husband to act the role of the wife by dressing in her clothes or underwear, and vice versa. The man should be a man and play the role of a man, and the woman must remain a woman and play her own role. Reversing the roles during sexual foreplay is not only sinful and degrading, but it will have a direct influence on the couple's relationship outside of the bedroom.

7) Urolagnia

Urolagnia is an abnormal sexual fetish in which participants derive sexual pleasure from urine and urination. It is a "sexual" act, used as a means of foreplay, which involves one partner urinating "golden shower" over the other partner. Some even go to the extent of drinking their partner's urine!

A sound, normal human being cannot even imagine anyone deriving pleasure from urine and filth. It is a sick and perverted fetish that can never be allowed in Islam. The basis of Islam is cleanliness and purity (*ṭahāra*). The collections of ḥadīth and books of *fiqh* are filled with pages dedicated to the rules of avoiding filth. *Ṭahāra* is the first issue that is addressed in almost every ḥadīth and *fiqh* work. Purity is half of one's faith and the key to prayer. A believer must remain pure and love pure things, and avoid and dislike impure and filth.

As such, urinating over one's spouse as part of sexual foreplay is, without doubt, impermissible and sinful. Not avoiding splashes of urine is a cause of punishment in the grave.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates:

مَرَّ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى قَبْرَيْنِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّهُمَا لَيُعَذَّبَانِ وَمَا يُعَذَّبَانِ مِنْ كَبِيرٍ ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: بَلَى ، أَمَّا أَحَدُهُمَا فَكَانَ يَسْعَى بِالنَّمِيمَةِ ، وَأَمَّا أَحَدُهُمَا فَكَانَ لَا يَسْتَتِرُ مِنْ بَوْلِهِ ، قَالَ: ثُمَّ أَخَذَ عُودًا رَطْبًا فَكَسَرَهُ بِاثْنَتَيْنِ ثُمَّ غَرَزَ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا عَلَى قَبْرٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ: لَعَلَّهُ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمَا مَا لَمْ يَيْبَسَا

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once passed by two graves and said, "They [in the grave] are being punished not for a great thing to avoid" Then he added, "Yes, [they are being punished for a great sin], for one of them used to go about with calumnies, while the other never saved himself from the splashes of urine." Ibn Abbās says, "Then he ﷺ took a wet green leaf and split it into two pieces, then placed one piece on each of the two graves and said, "Their punishment may decrease until these two pieces become dry." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1312)

Sayyiduna Abū Ḥurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

اسْتَنْزِهُوا مِنَ الْبَوْلِ فَإِنَّ عَامَّةَ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ مِنْهُ

"Avoid [the splashes of] urine, for indeed the punishment of the grave is generally due to it." (*Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* 1:128)

According to the jurists of the various schools of Islamic law, it is obligatory to avoid filth except when there is a need, such as cleaning the filth after relieving oneself. This is even more important in the case of urine, since it is decisively filthy and impure. One must avoid smearing oneself with filth in general and with urine in particular. (Ḥanafī: *Ṭaḥṭāwī 'alā Marāqī al-Falāḥ* P: 152 and *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindīyya* 1:50, Malikī: *Ḥāshiya al-Dasūqī 'alā 'l-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* 1:110, Shāfi'ī: *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 1:127 and Ḥanbalī: *Al-Mughnī* 1:141)

-7-

ACTUAL PLAY

ONCE A COUPLE spend sufficient time in foreplay and feel they are ready, they may engage in actual sex and penetration. There are many rules and etiquettes that need to be understood in this regard.

1) Privacy

a) It is of extreme importance that the spouses are alone when engaging in sexual relations. This is necessary not only during actual intercourse but even during foreplay. The couple must take means to ensure that they are away from the gazes of others, including small children. Ibn al-Hajj al-Mālikī mentions in his *Al-Madkhal* that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ﷺ would even eject a small breast-feeding child from his room when intending to have sex with his wife. Some scholars state that it is disliked to have even a cat in the room when intending to engage in sexual relations. (*Uṣūl al-Muʿāshara al-Zawjiyya* P: 67)

In this regard, care must be taken to close and lock the doors, so that no one is able to enter upon the couple, even by mistake. The windows should be shut with the curtains drawn properly, so that neighbours are unable to see in, even if inadvertently. This is more important in a multi-storey apartment complex or on a densely populated street. Couples failing to give due importance to this will give others an opportunity to see them engaging in sexual relations. This is a shameful and sinful act that can never be allowed, as concealing one's nakedness in front of others, especially when having sex, is an important obligation of Sharīʿa.

It is clear that there is no place for exhibitionism or voyeurism in Islam. Some people derive pleasure from displaying their bodies or their sexual acts in front of others. Islam completely rejects and condemns such perverted practices of sexual gratification. As such, it is

absolutely unlawful and sinful to have sex in public places where there is a possibility of being seen, such as in gardens, public parks, cars, beaches and patios or balconies outside of apartment buildings. Sex in public is also against the law in most countries, so not only would one be breaking the law of Allah, but also the law of one's country and presenting oneself to disgrace and possible arrest for indecent exposure.

b) The couple have to be careful to conceal their act of sex so that others do not hear it. Imam Ghazālī records a ḥadīth in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would cover his head, lower his voice and say to his wife, "Remain calm." Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī states that this ḥadīth is reported by Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī from Umm Salama ؓ with a weak chain of transmission. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:174)

As such, both the husband and wife must avoid making any noise during sex that may be heard by others. It is part of the etiquettes of sexual relations that the couple abstain from talking excessively and making loud noises. This becomes even more important when there may be others, such as parents, in the next room. Some couples do not care if their family members or neighbours hear them having sex. Not only is this sinful, but it also shows a lack of dignity. Couples who, despite trying, are unable to control the noises they make during sex, should avoid making love when others are close by. They should take means of going to a place where no one is able to hear them. The jurists state that it is unlawful to have sex even in the presence of a blind person, as he is able to hear them having sex. (See: *Radd al-Muhtār* 3:208 and *Al-Mughnī* 8:135)

c) It is unlawful for a man who has two wives to have sex with both of them simultaneously as a threesome, or to have sex with one wife in the presence of the other, even if they both give their consent to it. This is due to two reasons:

Firstly, it is impermissible for a woman to look at the *awra* of another woman even if she is her co-wife. The *awra* of a woman in front of other Muslim women is from her navel up to and including her knees. (*Al-Hidāya* 4:461) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a ḥadīth quoted earlier, "...and a woman should not look at the nakedness (*awra*) of another woman" (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2793), without distinguishing between a co-wife and another woman.

Secondly, sexual relations are to be kept private between the two people involved. Islam prohibits the husband and wife from discussing

the details of their sexual behaviour with others. A ḥadīth in this regard was quoted earlier in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1437). Revealing the details of one's sexual behaviour could not be more direct than actually having sex in front of another person. As such, this practice is unlawful and sinful.

This is why it is stated in the Ḥanafī Fiqh reference work, *Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya*, "It is prohibitively disliked [i.e. not permitted] to have sex with one wife in the presence of the other. So much so that if the husband demands that she has sex with him [in the other's presence], she does not have to make herself available, and by refusing she is not considered a rebellious wife." (*Al-Fatāwa al-Hindiyya* 1:341)

Imam Ibn Qudāma of the Ḥanbalī School states in his *Al-Mughnī*, "If the two wives agree that the husband have sex with one of them while the other watches, it is not allowed, for this act is immoral, absurd and doing away with the sense of honour (*murū'a*). As such, it is not permitted even with their consent." (*Al-Mughnī* 8:137. See also: *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 3:334 and *Sharḥ al-Khurshī 'alā Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl* 4:6)

d) As for having sex in front of small children, if the child has reached an age of discernment (*tamyīz*), and so has the sense to comprehend what is taking place in front of him, even if only partially, then it is prohibitively disliked and sinful for the couple to have sex in his presence (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 3:208).

Some Muslim couples are very careless in this regard and display their sexual acts openly in front of their young children and other family members. Islam is very clear when it comes to public display of affection. It prohibits the display of intimacy and other sexual acts such as kissing, hugging and caressing before others, including young children.

Allah Most High says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنكُمُ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِّن قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُم مِّنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِن بَعْدِ صَلَوٰةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَّكُمْ

"O you who believe, the slaves owned by you, and the [children] among you who have not reached puberty, must seek permission [before they come in your presence] on three occasions: before

> Fajr prayer; and when you take off your clothes at noon, and after the 'Ishā' prayer. These are your three times of privacy." (Qur'ān 24:58)

In verse 27 of the same chapter (*sūra*), Allah Most High laid down the rule that no person should enter the house of another without seeking permission. This verse exempts children and slaves living in the same house from this rule, and so have permission to enter the houses without specific permission. However, there are three times of privacy in which they too are required to seek permission. Imam Ibn Kathīr states, "Servants and children are commanded not to intrude upon the adults of the household at these times of privacy, for fear that the man may be having sex with his wife or involved in other acts of sexual intimacy." (*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm* 3:404)

It is worth noting here that Sharī'a instructs children to seek permission before entering lest they see something of that which takes place between the spouses. If this is the case, then how dishonourable would it be to do such things openly and deliberately in front of them?

Nāfi' relates from Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ that when his child would reach the age of discernment, he would have him removed [from his room], hence he would not be allowed to enter except with his permission." (*Al-Adab al-Mufrad* of Imam Bukhārī 1058)

Mūsā ibn Talḥa says, "I tried entering my mother's room with my father. He went in and I followed him. He turned and pushed me in the chest so that I fell on my bottom. Then he said, "Are you entering without permission?"" (*Al-Adab al-Mufrad* 1061)

Muslim parents who display sexual acts in front of their children must realise they are making a grave mistake. They are wrong in thinking that these are merely young children without the capability of understanding such matters. In fact, this has an extremely negative effect on their children's upbringing. Children are created with this natural instinct to imitate their parents in all their affairs, so it is possible that they may try to imitate their parents, even though playfully, and do the same things with other children. The destructive consequences of this are clear.

In addition, doing such things openly is contrary to modesty and decency. Islam teaches its followers to be dignified, and prohibits them from engaging in any action that would lead to an immoral atmosphere.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a practical example of modesty and bashfulness. Sayyiduna Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ relates:

كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أشد حياء من العذراء في خدرها ، وكان إذا كره شيئا عرفناه في وجهه

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was more bashful than the virgin behind her curtain [or in her private quarters], and when he disliked something, we recognised it from his face." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2320)

As such, couples must avoid having sex or displaying their intimate and sexual acts such as kissing, hugging, caressing and fondling one another in the presence of young children. If the child has reached an age of discernment, then this is sinful.

As for sexual relations in a room where a small baby is sleeping, this too should be avoided wherever possible. It was mentioned earlier that the predecessors (*salaf*) would avoid sexual relations in a room where a small child of the age of breast-feeding, less than two years of age, or an animal was present. As such, it is somewhat disliked to engage in sexual relations in their presence, but not unlawful (*ḥarām*) per se.

e) Recently a question was posed to the author about the permissibility of a couple taking intimate pictures of each other or recording themselves having sex, and then looking at the photos or watching the video.

Regardless of the difference of opinion amongst contemporary scholars about the ruling on photography, and even though the position taken by many scholars is that photographs fall under the rubric of picture-making (*taṣwīr*) of living creatures and humans, which is explicitly forbidden in over 20 authenticated hadiths, taking nude pictures of one's spouse or recording sexual relations and then looking at the images cannot be considered permissible at all.

The reason for this is clear. By taking such pornographic images, one is potentially giving others the opportunity to see one's nakedness, and this is impermissible. The sexual images could be misplaced or lost and come into the hands of a stranger. Imagine the reaction if the images or videos found their way into the hands of the couple's children!

Even if the images are secured and hidden, the possibility still remains that someone may see them, even if all precautions are taken.

Some unusual occurrence can transpire making it possible for a third person to get hold of the images. Preventing an evil before it actually happens is a well-established principle of Islamic jurisprudence.

In addition, such practices contradict the modesty that Islam commands. The couple are only permitted to look at each other's naked bodies because of the need for it during sexual relations, and even then, it is superior for them to avoid doing so.

In conclusion, it is not allowed for the couple to take nude images of themselves for viewing later on. This is disregarding the fact that many scholars hold photography to be impermissible.

8) Covering up the Qur'ān

One of the etiquettes of sexual relations is to cover up or put away copies of the Qur'ān, verses of the Qur'ān hanging on the wall and other Islamic literature such as hadith collections and books consisting of invocations (*du'ā* and *adhkār*), if possible, without undue hardship. There is no sin, however, for not doing so.

Imam Haskafi states in his *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār*, "There is nothing wrong with having sex in a room in which there is a copy of the Qur'ān, because it is generally difficult to avoid."

In his commentary of the above text, Ibn 'Ābidīn states, however, that it is superior to cover up the Qur'ān. (*Radd al-Muhtār 'alā 'l-Durr al-Mukhtār* 6:423)

9) Reciting the Supplication (*du'ā*)

One of the objectives of sexual relations is to produce pious and righteous offspring. As such, it is important that the couple supplicate to Allah Most High before commencing sex, asking Him to keep Satan away from themselves and their potential offspring.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَهُمْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَهْلَهُ قَالَ: بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُمَّ جَنِّبْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ

مَا رَزَقْتَنَا، فَإِنَّهُ إِنْ يُقَدَّرْ بَيْنَهُمَا وَلَدٌ فِي ذَلِكَ، لَمْ يَضُرَّهُ شَيْطَانٌ أَبَدًا

"When approaching one's spouse, if one says, "In the name of Allah. O Allah! Protect us from Satan and protect what you grant us [i.e. the coming offspring] from Satan" then if it is destined that they have a child from that intercourse, Satan will never be able to harm it." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 141 & *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1434, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Thus, it is recommended prior to penetration for both spouses to first pronounce the name of Allah Most High saying:

بِسْمِ اللهِ

Transliteration:
Bismillāh

Translation:
In the name of Allah

Or

بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Transliteration:
Bismillāh ar-raḥmān ar-raḥīm

Translation:
In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.

Thereafter, recite the following supplication:

اللّٰهُمَّ جَنِّبْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا رَزَقْتَنَا

Transliteration:
Allahumma jannibnash-shayṭān, wa jannibish-shayṭāna mā razaqtana

Translation:
O Allah! Protect us from Satan and protect what you grant us from Satan.

It is important to recite the above-mentioned supplication (*du'ā*), since firstly, it is from the guidance given to us by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and secondly, one's potential offspring may not be saved from the evils of Satan if the *Du'ā* is disregarded.

4) Avoiding Facing the Qibla
One of the etiquettes of sexual relations is to avoid facing the direction of the Qibla, because one's nakedness is normally exposed in such a state. Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn of the Hanafī School, Imam Ghazālī of the Shāfi'ī School and Imam Ibn Qudāma of the Hanbalī School all mention that it is somewhat disliked (*makrūh tanzīh*) to face the Qibla whilst having sex [although not sinful].

Imam Ibn Qudāma states, "One should not face the Qibla during sex, for Amr ibn Ḥazm and 'Aṭā' both disliked it". (*Al-Mughnī* 8:136, also see: *Radd al-Muḥtār* 1:341 and *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharh Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:174)

5) Talking During Sex

Talking during foreplay is not only permitted, but rather encouraged, as outlined previously. It is recommended that both spouses exchange kind words that express their love, longing and desire for one another. There is nothing wrong even if both spouses use sexually arousing language during foreplay, provided there is nothing specifically wrong or sinful in the nature of their conversation and provided others are not able to hear them, as discussed earlier.

As for talking during actual sexual penetration, classical scholars generally state that it is disliked (*makrūh*) to do so excessively, because:

a) Sexual relations are based on concealment;

b) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded for proper manners to be observed during sex, whilst excessive talking is contrary to proper manners, and;

c) It is similar to when one is in the toilet or bathroom where talking is *Makrūh* due to one's nakedness being exposed. (See: *Radd al-Muḥtār* 6:418 & *Al-Mughnī* 8:136)

Having said the above, the renowned Hanafi jurist of recent times in the Subcontinent, Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (may Allah have mercy on him) states that talking during sex is disliked when it is with others. As far as the couple talking with each other, there is nothing wrong with that. (*Imdād al-Muftīn* P: 1032)

6) Sexual Positions (ways in which spouses physically position themselves for sex)

When it comes to selecting a suitable position for sex, Islam grants the couple a general permission to choose whatever position they mutually agree upon, provided it is vaginal sex and not anal sex – which is clearly forbidden, as will be discussed later. A couple may find a particular method of having sex to be more comfortable and pleasurable, whilst another couple may feel at ease with a different position altogether. As such, it is left to the couple to decide on the position most suited to them, taking into account physical comfort, satisfaction and enjoyment.

Allah Most High says:

نِسَآؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُواْ حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُواْ لأَنفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ

"Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish, but do some good act for yourselves beforehand; and fear Allah." (Qur'ān 2:223)

In this verse, Allah Most High uses the expression *harth* which means tillage or place of cultivation. The analogy between women and tillage indicates that it is only permissible to have sex with one's wife in her vagina, since this is the only way for the seeds to be cultivated and for her to conceive. However, in order to reach that place, any position or side can be adopted, whether from the front, the back or her prostrating and facing the ground (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim* P: 1084).

Moreover, there are many reports found in hadīth literature that explain this verse, and mention its circumstance of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*). Some are presented here:

Sayyiduna Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh رضي الله عنه relates:

كَانَتْ الْيَهُودُ تَقُولُ: إِذَا أَتَى الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ مِنْ دُبُرِهَا فِي قُبُلِهَا كَانَ الْوَلَدُ أَحْوَلَ، فَنَزَلَتْ
نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ

The Jews used to say, "If a man were to approach his wife from behind [but] in her vagina, the child [that she conceives] would be born cross-eyed, so the verse was revealed: "Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish." (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 4254, *Sahīh Muslim* 1435 & *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2978, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās رضي الله عنه relates:

جَاءَ عُمَرُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَلَكْتُ قَالَ وَمَا
أَهْلَكَكَ قَالَ حَوَّلْتُ رَحْلِي اللَّيْلَةَ قَالَ فَلَمْ يَرُدَّ عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ شَيْئًا
قَالَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأْتُوا
حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ أَقْبِلْ وَأَدْبِرْ وَاتَّقِ الدُّبُرَ وَالْحَيْضَةَ

'Umar رضي الله عنه came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I have been doomed." He said, "What is it that has doomed you?" He said, "I changed my saddle last night [referring to having sex with his wife from behind but in the vagina]." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not say anything until this verse was revealed unto the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Your wives are

tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish." So he said, "Approach her from the front or back, but avoid the anus and [the period of] menstruation." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2980 and Nasa'i in his *Ishrat al-Nisa'* 94)

Sayyiduna Abdullāh ibn Abbās ﷺ relates:

إنما كان هذا الحي من الأنصار وهم أهل وثن مع هذا الحي من يهود وهم أهل كتاب ، وكانوا يرون لهم فضلا عليهم في العلم فكانوا يقتدون بكثير من فعلهم ، وكان من أمر أهل الكتاب أن لا يأتوا النساء إلا على حرف وذلك أستر ما تكون المرأة ، فكان هذا الحي من الأنصار قد أخذوا بذلك من فعلهم ، وكان هذا الحي من قريش يشرحون النساء شرحا منكرا ويتلذذون منهن مقبلات ومدبرات ومستلقيات ، فلما قدم المهاجرون المدينة تزوج رجل منهم امرأة من الأنصار فذهب يصنع بها ذلك فأنكرته عليه وقالت : إنما كنا نؤتى على حرف فاصنع ذلك وإلا فاجتنبني ، حتى شري أمرهما ، فبلغ ذلك رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ، فأنزل الله عز وجل : نساؤكم حرث لكم فأتوا حرثكم أنى شئتم أي : مقبلات ومدبرات ومستلقيات ، يعني بذلك موضع الولد

"...This clan of the *Anṣār*, who were idolaters [before Islam], lived in the company of the Jews who were the people of the Book. They [the Anṣār] accepted their [i.e the Jews] superiority over themselves in respect to knowledge, and so followed most of their actions. The people of the Book [i.e. the Jews] used to approach their women on one side alone [i.e. lying on their backs], because this was the most concealing position for the woman. So the clan of the *Anṣār* adopted this practice from them. This tribe of the *Quraysh*, [however], used to uncover their women completely, and seek pleasure with them from the front, from the back and laying them on their backs. When the *Muhājirūn* (the immigrants) came to Al-Madina, one of them married a woman of the *Anṣār*. He wanted to do the same kind of things with her [i.e. what the Quraysh were accustomed to], but she objected and said, "We were only approached on one side [i.e. laying on the back], so do that otherwise stay away from me." This matter of theirs

spread widely, and reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. So Allah Most High revealed: "Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish." Meaning from the front, from behind or laying on the back. But this verse meant the place of the delivery of the child [i.e. the vagina]." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 2157)

Umm Salama ؓ relates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ regarding the verse: "Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish" that:

يَعْنِي صِمَامًا وَاحِدًا

"It means one opening only [i.e. the vagina]." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 2979)

The verse of the Qur'ān and the explanatory hadīths clearly indicate that the couple are permitted to have sex in any position they wish, without restriction. The examples of sexual positions cited in these hadīths indicate diversity and not limitation. As such, any other position the couple choose is perfectly fine. However, the condition is that it is vaginal and not anal sex, as this is absolutely unlawful.

As far as specific positions are concerned, books written on sexual etiquettes mention the following:

a) The Man-on-top Position

The man being on top is the most common and natural sexual position. One form of this is when the wife lies on her back with her legs spread, while the husband lies flat over her in a manner that he covers her body with his. In this position, however, the husband should take care of not forcing all of his weight on his wife, since this can be uncomfortable for her. He may support some or all of his weight on his elbows, hands or knees.

Scholars state that a subtle indication of this position can be found in the Qur'ān. Allah Most High says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ
حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَت دَّعَوَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ
فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهُ شُرَكَاءَ فِيمَا آتَاهُمَا فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

> "It is He Who created you from a single soul, and out of him created his wife, in order that he may find comfort in her. So when he covers her with himself, she bears a light burden and carries it about. Thereafter, when she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah, their Lord, [saying] "If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be grateful." But when We bless them with a perfect child, they ascribe partners to Him in what He blessed them with. Indeed Allah is much higher than what they associate with Him." (Qur'ān 7:189-190)

This verse refers to the creation of Sayyiduna Ādam and Sayyida Hawā' (peace be upon them). It also discloses the mindset of the infidels from their progeny, in that when one of them has sex with his wife by covering her completely and she conceives a child, they ask Allah to bless them with a sound and perfect child, but when the child is born, they ascribe it to their invented deities. (See: *The Meanings of the Noble Qur'ān* 1:315)

The expression in the verse "When he covers her with himself" indicates the position of the husband lying over his wife, covering her completely with his body.

In a similar position, the wife lies on her back with her legs drawn up toward her chest and her knees raised high, while the husband enters her in almost a sitting or squatting posture.

This position has been implicitly mentioned in the following hadith: Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا جلس بين شعبها الأربع ثم جهدها فقد وجب عليه الغسل

> "When a man sits amidst her [i.e. the wife] four parts and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath (*ghusl*) becomes obligatory upon him." (*Sahih Muslim* 348)

Imam Nawawi states, "The scholars have disagreed about the intended meaning of the "four parts (*shu'ab al-arba'*)". Some said that it means the arms and the legs, while others have said that it refers to the legs and thighs, and others said it means the legs and the edge of the pubic area. Qādī 'Iyad chose the meaning of the four areas surrounding the vagina [...]." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim* 4: 400)

As such, one of the interpretations of the "four parts" is the woman's legs and thighs. This seems to refer to the position in which the wife, while on her back, folds her knees and the husband enters her in almost a sitting posture, so that her thighs and calves form the "four parts".

There are many other forms of the man-on-top position, mostly with minor differences. Scholars and experts alike mention that the man-on-top position is the most effective in terms of the wife conceiving. It also allows a great deal of body contact, and the spouses are able to kiss and embrace each other at the same time. (*Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* P: 182)

b) The Rear-entry Position
This is when the husband enters the wife when she has her back to him. This position was explicitly allowed in some of the ḥadīths cited earlier. In one narration the expression used to describe the wife is "*mujabbat*" which basically means she is facing down in a posture of prostration. The wife may also get on her hands and knees whilst her husband kneels behind her. There is no doubt in the permissibility of this position.

It should be remembered, however, that the rear-entry position is not anal sex, as discussed earlier. In the rear-entry position the husband enters the vagina when the wife has her back to him, whilst in anal sex the husband enters her anus, which is completely forbidden in Islam.

c) The Side-by-side Position
In this position, the spouses lie on their sides facing each other, or they lie on their sides and the husband enters the vagina from behind. This position is also unquestionably permitted, and convenient during later stages of pregnancy to accommodate the woman's belly.

d) The Standing Position
The great jurist (*faqih*) of recent times in the Indian Subcontinent, Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawī, in response to a question about the permissibility of showering while standing up, states that the Qur'ānic exegetes have generalised the implication of the Qur'ānic verse "So approach your tillage from where you wish" to include the sitting and standing positions. So to take a shower standing up is even more worthy of being permitted, for it is lighter than having sex. [In other words, when sex with one's spouse is permitted in a standing position, then taking a shower in such a state would without doubt be permitted]. (*Imdād al-Fatawa* 1:18)

It is permitted to have sex in a standing position, whether both spouses stand or just one of them. Both spouses may face each other or the wife can have her back towards her husband with him entering from behind into the vagina.

Having said that, both scholars and experts caution against having

sex regularly in a standing position, as it may be harmful medically. Although there is not enough medical evidence to prove this, but theoretically, there is a risk of increased back pain, sciatica, vaginal and rectal prolapse. This is only from a medical point of view. As far as the Islamic ruling is concerned, the standing position is permitted, as stated earlier.

e) The Sitting Position

Engaging in sexual relations with one's spouse in a sitting position is also perfectly allowed in light of the Qur'ānic verse: "So approach your tillage from where you wish."

f) The Woman-on-top Position

Islamically, the sexual position where the wife is on top of her husband is also permitted due to the general purport of the Qur'ānic verse quoted more than once in this book. This includes the husband lying on his back whilst the wife sits on top of him or she lies with her whole body over his.

However, scholars and experts state that the woman-on-top position is unhealthy and harmful. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim explains in his *Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* that when the wife is on top, the husband's sperm can be impeded from fully exiting, which may harm him. It is also possible for the wife's fluids to enter the husband's sexual organ resulting in him being inflicted with illnesses. (*Al-Tibb al-Nabawī* P. 183)

Once again, this is all from a medical point of view, and medical opinions can change over time. As such, it would be worthwhile for couples intending to have sex in such positions to take sound medical advice and act accordingly.

Finally, there is nothing wrong with the couple changing their positions, even if many times, during one sexual encounter. Furthermore, diversity and versatility in sexual positions does not contradict religious propriety, decorum and decency. It is wrong to assume that such behaviour is a sign of lack of modesty, for Allah Most High Himself has permitted legally married couples to engage in various sexual positions without restriction. As such, couples need not feel guilty or uneasy in this regard.

7) Fantasising

Fantasising of another person in a sexual way during sexual relations with one's own spouse is unlawful (*harām*) and sinful. It is a form of fornication (*zinā*) of the heart and mind to deliberately fantasise about sexual relationships with other than one's spouse. Allah Most High says:

إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

"Surely the hearing, the sight and the heart – each one of them shall be enquired into." (Qur'ān 17:36)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

فَالْعَيْنَانِ زِنَاهُمَا النَّظَرُ وَالْأُذُنَانِ زِنَاهُمَا الِاسْتِمَاعُ وَاللِّسَانُ زِنَاهُ الْكَلَامُ وَالْيَدُ زِنَاهَا الْبَطْشُ وَالرِّجْلُ زِنَاهَا الْخُطَا وَالْقَلْبُ يَهْوَى وَيَتَمَنَّى وَيُصَدِّقُ ذَلِكَ الْفَرْجُ وَيُكَذِّبُهُ

"...The fornication (*zinā'*) of the eyes is the lustful look and the fornication of the ears is to listen [to unlawful things] and the fornication of the tongue is to talk [about unlawful things] and the fornication of the hand is to touch [unlawful things] and the fornication of the feet is to walk [to the place of sin] and the heart yearns and desires, and the sexual organs then either testify this or deny it." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5889 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2657, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Imam Nawawī states, in the commentary of this hadīth, that some people are involved in actual fornication (*zinā' ḥaqīqiyya*) by making their sexual organs meet, whilst others are involved in metaphorical fornication (*zinā' majāziyya*), by casting unlawful gazes, listening to unlawful things, touching the hand and body or kissing a non-related person of the opposite gender, walking to a place of fornication, unlawful conversation with a non-related person of the opposite gender or fornicating with the heart and mind. (See: *Al-Minhaj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* P. 1880)

The jurists also explicitly prohibit fantasising about someone else during sex with one's spouse. Imam Ibn 'Ābidīn states in his *Radd al-Muḥtār*, "If one has sex with one's wife, while thinking about a strange woman to the point that he thinks he is having sex with her [...]. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Mālikī said, "It is unlawful, because it is a form of fornication. Our scholars [the Mālikīs] hold that for someone to take a glass of water and drink from it, believing it is wine, then that water will become unlawful for him to drink." [...] And the principles of our school [i.e. the Ḥanafī School] would also indicate its impermissibility, because thinking about a strange woman during sex is to actively think about sinning, and is therefore similar to the example of drinking water

Then I saw the author of *Tabyīn al-Maḥārim* from our [Ḥanafī] scholars quoting Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Mālikī and agreeing with him." (*Radd al-Muḥtār* 6:372)

As far as role-playing is concerned, during which a couple act out a fantasy involving dressing up as specific characters, a teacher, pupil, doctor, nurse, patient, boss and secretary, and so on, if this is done with someone specific in mind, then it is unquestionably unlawful as stated earlier. If a fantasy role is acted out without someone specific in mind, then this too is not permitted, for one will be fantasising about having sex with a stranger who is a doctor or a nurse. If the thought is that one's spouse has taken the role of that character, such as pretending that one's husband is a doctor, then this is also best avoided although not completely unlawful, since it could easily lead into thinking that one's spouse is someone else, resulting in fornication of the heart and mind. Couples should be happy and content with their partners for who they are and what they are. Dressing up to become someone they are not can be a very dangerous game and is ultimately detrimental to the marital relationship.

8) Orgasm and Sexual Climax

Among the obligatory rights of marriage is that each spouse's sexual needs are fulfilled through the other. In this regard, it is of utmost importance that the husband discharges this right of his wife when having sex with her, and only fulfils himself after she has achieved fulfilment, given that women generally take longer reaching an orgasm.

The husband should hold back from ejaculating until his wife is fully satisfied and achieves sexual fulfilment. If he achieves climax before her, he should not withdraw until she has an orgasm and achieves sexual climax. This is absolutely essential for the well-being of one's marriage, and failing to give this due importance can result in the wife becoming frustrated and in having animosity in her heart for her husband. It can lead to disputes and argumentation between the spouses and, in some cases, even to divorce. A husband who is solely concerned about his own satisfaction is selfish and must change his ways and give consideration to his wife's needs.

Imam Ibn Qudāma states: "It is recommended (*mustaḥab*) for the husband to engage in foreplay with his wife before actual sex in order that her sexual desire is aroused so that she experiences the same pleasure from sex that he experiences [...] If he was to climax before her, then it is disliked (*makrūh*) for him to withdraw before she achieves sexual climax, because of what Anas ibn Mālik ﷺ related that

the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her. Then when he fulfils his need, he should not hurry [in withdrawing] until she fulfils her need." [Recorded by Abū Ya'la al-Mawsili in his *Musnad* 4201] And also because in it [withdrawing prematurely], there is harm upon her and preventing her from fulfilling her sexual need." (*Al-Mughnī* 8:136).

Imam Ghazali in his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and the commentator of his *Ihyā'*, 'Allāma Murtaḍā' al-Zabīdī in his commentary *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn* both explain that after achieving sexual climax, the husband should wait for his wife to also achieve climax, since sometimes she may be delayed in having an orgasm. For the husband to withdraw from her in such a state will harm her and may be a cause for her to hate him. Of course, if he knows that she has had an orgasm, then there is no need for him to wait.

They further state that the husband achieving sexual climax before the wife causes hatred and dislike in her heart, and that climaxing together is the most pleasurable and satisfying for her, because in this way she will not be shy from having an orgasm, since her husband is also occupied with his own sexual climax. However, climaxing together is rare. It is not problematic for the wife to reach orgasm before her husband, as the most that will occur in this situation is that she will be fatigued and feel the weight of her husband over her, but it will be easy for her to exercise patience (*ṣabr*) with this, contrary to when the husband withdraws before she has an orgasm, as this is detrimental and harmful for her. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharh Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:176)

In light of this, it can be said that it is best for the spouses to try and achieve sexual climax together, as that is most satisfying for both. If this is not possible, then the husband should wait and allow his wife to have an orgasm before he ejaculates himself. He should try his best to avoid ejaculating before she has an orgasm, and if he was to ejaculate before her due to not being able to control himself, then he should not withdraw until she achieves sexual satisfaction.

A problem faced by some men is premature ejaculation which is to climax too early. Some husbands ejaculate as soon as they enter their wives, and some even before that, during foreplay. This can be troublesome and problematic for both spouses, since they would love to prolong their session of intimacy before achieving climax.

In order to delay his ejaculation, the husband should do the following:

a) Avoid having his sexual organ stroked or caressed during foreplay. The less contact made between his sexual organ and the wife's body, the easier it will be for him to control himself.

b) When having sex, divert his attention to something else, so that it helps him control himself.

c) Both spouses should avoid excessive movement during the actual act of sex, because excessive movement will result in him ejaculating early. (See: *Uṣūl al-Mu'āshara al-Zawjiyya* P: 71-72)

d) 'Allāma Murtaḍā' al-Zabīdī states in his commentary of the *Iḥyā'* that the most beneficial remedy for someone affected by premature ejaculation is to avoid having sex before foreplay. He should sexually arouse his wife by playing around with her, kissing her, stroking her breasts, embracing her and the like. Then, when he sees that her colour has changed and her eyes have become red [out of desire for him], and he feels that she is ready, prepared, and desirous of him, only then should he initiate sexual intercourse. (See: *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 6:176)

9) Du'ā when Ejaculating
It is recommended for both spouses to recite the following supplication (*du'ā*) in their hearts at the time of ejaculation, as was the practice of Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ:

اللّٰهُمَّ لَا تَجْعَلْ لِلشَّيْطَانِ فِيمَا رَزَقْتَنَا نَصِيبًا

Transliteration:
Allāhumma lā taj'al li ash-shayṭāni fīmā razaqtanā naṣīban

Translation:
O Allah! Do not grant the Satan a share in what [children] You bless us with (Related by Imam Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Al-Musannaf fi 'l-Ahadith wa 'l-Athār* 3:402).

Shaykh Muftī Taqī 'Uthmānī states in his book *Radiant Prayers* after recording this supplication: "From these two prayers [i.e. the supplication before commencing sex and the supplication at the time of ejaculating], it can be deduced that exactly at the time when one is busy gratifying one's carnal desires and engaged in an act even the mention of which is considered a matter of shame, one has been taught to keep one's relationship with Allah Most High foremost in the mind, and not to hesitate supplicating before Him. Thus, what was a sensual act has been turned into an act of worship." (*Radiant Prayers* P: 65)

- 8 -

OTHER FORMS OF SEX

In the last few pages, matters relating to actual play have been discussed in considerable detail, from privacy up to ejaculation. There now remains certain other forms of sex, so it is important to understand the Islamic viewpoint on them.

1) Anal Sex

It was discussed earlier in the section on sexual positions that it is permitted for the couple to choose any position they like for sex, but subject to one condition, that it must be vaginal sex.

As far as anal sex is concerned, it is categorically forbidden in Islam and is a major sin by consensus because of the explicit texts clearly establishing this. There are also grave spiritual and established physical and psychological harms in anal sex. It is an unnatural and repulsive act that simply has no place in a Muslim's sex life. It is a practice of those whose nature has been distorted to prefer that which is filthy to that which is pure. Not only is anal sex sinful and harmful, it also violates the right of the wife, who is entitled to having offspring through vaginal sex with her spouse.

Allah Most High says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ
فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ نِسَاؤُكُمْ
حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ
وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: "It is an impurity. So keep away from women during menstruation, and do not approach them until they are cleansed. But when they are cleansed, then approach them from where Allah has commanded you. Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure. Your wives are tillage for you to cultivate. So approach your tillage from where you wish, but do some good act for yourselves beforehand; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give glad tidings to the believers." (Qur'ān 2: 222-223)

In the above verses, Allah Most High gives impurity as the reason for prohibiting sex during menstruation. Once a woman is cleansed from the impurity of blood, Allah Most High permits having sex with her but "from where Allah has commanded you" meaning in the vagina. This is further elucidated in the term "*harth*" used in the second verse. As vaginal sex is prohibited during menstruation because of temporary filth, being menstrual blood, then anal sex is undoubtedly unlawful since the anus is always polluted with filth.

Moreover, the term *harth* (tillage) indicates that it is only permissible to have sex with one's wife in the vagina, as this is the only route through which the seeds are cultivated, and not the anus, since it is a place of filth and impurity. (*At-Tibb al-Nabawī* Pg 187)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also emphatically prohibited anal sex in many hadiths.

Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لا ينظر الله إلى رجل أتى رجلا أو امرأة في الدبر

"Allah shall not [even] look [with kindness] at any man who enters another man or a woman in the anus." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 1165)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

ملعون من أتى امرأته في دبرها

"Cursed is he, who enters a woman in her anus." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 2155 and others)

The meaning of "being cursed (*mal'ūn*)" is that one is distant from Divine Mercy, and an object of Divine Dislike. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed certain matters so that we take heed and avoid them.

Sayyiduna Khuzayma ibn Thābit ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ – ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ – لَا تَأْتُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي أَدْبَارِهِنَّ

"Allah is not ashamed of the truth [saying this thrice]. Do not enter women in their anuses." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1924, *Musnad Ahmad* & others)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى رَجُلٍ جَامَعَ امْرَأَتَهُ فِي دُبُرِهَا

"Allah shall not look [with kindness] at a man who enters his wife in the anus." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1923, *Musnad Aḥmad* and others)

These, and many other, evidences are clear in the prohibition of anal sex even with one's own wife. This is in addition to the fact that anal sex causes undue pain and is a source of many diseases widespread in today's promiscuous society.

As such, it is unlawful and sinful for the husband to penetrate in his wife's anus. However, it is permitted for him, under normal circumstances, to touch the surrounding and outside area of the anus, even by rubbing his penis in between her buttocks or groin, as long as there is no penetration and as long as that area is not soiled with filth. The husband is permitted to touch and caress any part of his wife's body which includes the area outside of the anus. This, however, is only permitted if he is certain of avoiding penetration, otherwise abstaining from that area altogether is necessary. (See: *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 3:181, *Ḥāshiya al-Dasūqī 'alā 'l-Sharh al-Kabīr* 2:342 and *Uṣūl al-Mu'āshara al-Zawjiyya* P: 82)

2) Oral Sex-

The spread of pornography has increased the prevalence of oral sex, and it is now commonly practiced by many couples. Muslims are frequently asking about the Islamic viewpoint on oral sex. Unfortunately, some people shy away from discussing this matter altogether, while others

regard any discussion of it to be offensive. Both these approaches are incorrect. In order to ensure that one's sex life is in harmony with Islamic teachings, it is important to discuss the Islamic perspective on oral sex in detail.

Oral sex is the use of the mouth or the tongue to stimulate another person's genitals. Oral stimulation of the male organ is called fellatio, whilst oral stimulation of the female genitalia is known as cunnilingus. The term oral sex covers a wide range of activities, from simply kissing the genitalia to the actual taking in and swallowing of sexual fluids. As such, the Islamic ruling will depend on what exactly is entailed by this term.

a) If oral sex entails inserting the penis into the wife's mouth to the extent that she swallows or takes impure or filthy substances such as semen (*maniy*) or pre-ejaculatory fluid (*madhy*) into the mouth, or the husband placing his mouth onto the wife's vagina to the point that he takes her discharge in his mouth, then this is sinful. If there is fear of this, and this fear is at the level of likelihood, then it is also impermissible.

It is unlawful to intentionally swallow filthy and impure substances or to introduce them into the mouth. This includes all male and female genital excretions and sexual fluids such as urine, pre-ejaculatory fluid, semen and *wady*, a thick white, cloudy, fluid that exits either before or after urinating. Even though semen is not considered impure according to some scholars, for example the Shāfi'is, contrary to the Hanafis, they nevertheless hold its oral intake to be prohibited. As such, swallowing or consuming all forms of sexual fluids of the wife or husband is forbidden.

Imam Nawawī of the Shāfi'ī school states in his *Al-Majmū'*: "The correct well-known opinion is that it is forbidden to consume semen because it is filthy (*mustakhbath*) [even though not impure]. Allah Most High says: "...And He (Allah Most High) makes unlawful for them filthy things (*khabā'ith*) [Qur'an 7:157]." (*Al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* 2:397)

b) If oral sex is practiced and all precautions are taken to prevent sexual fluids from entering the mouth, for example if the couple are only gently kissing each other's genitalia without any fear or likelihood of consuming sexual fluids, then it is permitted, although disliked and improper. It may be considered as a form of foreplay, similar to kissing other parts of the body and so permitted, but disliked, as placing one's mouth on one's spouse's genitalia is against religious propriety.

The famous Hanafi Fiqh reference work, *Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya*, states: "If a man inserts his penis into his wife's mouth, it has been said that it is disliked (*makruh*), and others hold that it is not disliked." (*Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya* 5/372)

This clear passage in one of the major Hanafi Fiqh reference works indicates that there is a scholarly difference about the permissibility of a man inserting his penis into his wife's mouth. According to some scholars it is disliked, whilst others permit it. It should be remembered that both, those who allow it and those who consider it disliked, stipulate that no sexual fluids enter the spouse's mouth as mentioned earlier. Normally, this is difficult to avoid. Because of this, and because it is generally considered contrary to the proper conduct of a Muslim, most contemporary scholars hold this practice to be disliked, even if the transfer of sexual fluids is avoided.

The mouth is a noble part of one's body and is the means of reciting the Qur'an, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) and sending salutations on the blessed Messenger of Allah ﷺ (*salawat*). It follows, then, that it is offensive to use it to stimulate the spouse's genitalia, and unlawful if filth enters the mouth.

Finally, if one's spouse demands oral sex, it is not obligatory to consent to it, even if precautions are taken to avoid sexual fluids coming into contact with the mouth. The wife is only obliged to make herself available for sex, whilst the husband is required to have sex with her enough to maintain her chastity.

9) Phone Sex with One's Spouse

Phone sex consists of sexual conversations between two people over the telephone, with the objective of arousing each other. The point of phone sex is to help the partner in achieving an orgasm through masturbation. "Phone sex" is frequently put in quotation marks because sex is usually associated with at least touching each other.

As for the Islamic ruling concerning married couples indulging in phone sex, there are two situations:

a) If the objective is to arouse one's spouse and help them masturbate to the point of having an orgasm, then this is not allowed. Masturbation is prohibited and causes many personal and societal ills, and as such, it is not permitted for either spouse to masturbate and play with themselves during the course of a telephone conversation. It cannot be called mutual masturbation, since this only occurs when satisfaction is gained through a part of one's spouse's body.

b) If during a phone conversation, the objective is not to masturbate, but rather the spouses are merely intimate, then this is permitted.

There is nothing wrong in such intimate conversation taking place between the spouses whether they are together or apart, provided one does not fear masturbation or any other unlawful act. If masturbation is avoided, but one experiences an orgasm by simply talking intimately with one's spouse, then this also does not seem to fall within the ambit of unlawfulness, provided the objective was not to masturbate or have an orgasm.

-9-

AFTER PLAY

ISLAMIC TEACHINGS WITH regard to sexual relations do not end at the termination of intercourse between the spouses, they go much beyond that. The time after having sex, which could be termed as "after play", is as important as foreplay and sex itself. There are many important rulings and etiquettes that need to kept in mind in this regard.

1) Being Affectionate

After achieving sexual climax, both spouses should remain in their positions for a while before separating from one another. Islam teaches couples to be considerate and compassionate to one another at all times, and not only whilst having sex. A husband who is insensitive and unresponsive after sex will appear to his wife as though his interest in her is only in sexual gratification. As such, he should ensure that there are kind and affectionate exchanges, even after having sex.

2) Cleanliness and Purification

After having sex, both spouses should clean their genital areas with clean pieces of cloth or tissue. If they had placed a sheet or cloth below them before having sex, which is recommended, that may be used in cleaning themselves, otherwise a separate cloth may be used.

Imam Ibn Qudāma states in his *Al-Mughnī*, "It is recommended (*mustahab*) for the wife to keep a piece of cloth with her that her husband can use after having sex and wipe himself with it, as Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﵂ said: "An astute woman should keep a piece of cloth with her. After her husband has sex with her, she should give it to him, so that he may wipe himself and she may wipe herself with it." (*Al-Mughnī* 8:136)

Cleanliness after sex is of utmost importance. Some Muslim couples are extremely negligent in this regard, ignoring the fact that their bed-

sheet and clothes may have become impure. It is strongly encouraged to lay a separate sheet of clothing specifically for sex, which can be put in the washing afterwards. If sexual fluids have come into contact with one's clothes or body parts, they must be purified with water before praying, otherwise, one's prayer will be invalid. The bedding should also be changed after having sex if sexual fluids have come into contact with it.

Couples need to remember that pre-ejaculatory fluid (*madhy*) is impure according to all the classical scholars. *Madhy* is "A thin white fluid that exits without force from a man or woman when sexually aroused but is not accompanied by an ejaculation". It can often be released without one being aware of it, and is more prevalent in women than men. *Madhy* only necessitates a ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*) but is legally considered impure (*nājis*), and so has to be washed if one's body or clothing is affected by it. Imam Nawawī states that the whole Muslim *Umma* are in unanimous agreement that *Madhy* is impure. (See: *Hāshiya al-Taḥṭāwī 'alā Marāqī al-Falāḥ* P: 100, *Al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* 2:395 & *Al-Mughnī* 1:162)

As far as semen (*many*) is concerned, it is defined with respect to men as "A thick white fluid that gushes out with force from the penis causing it to slacken and reduce in size." With respect to women, it is the thin and yellow ejaculatory fluid. *Many* is the fluid with which Allah Most High Creates human beings. Allah Most High says:

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَن يُتْرَكَ سُدًى أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِّن مَّنِيٍّ يُمْنَىٰ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ فَجَعَلَ
مِنْهُ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ أَلَيْسَ ذَٰلِكَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَن يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ

> "Does man think that he will be left unchecked? Was he not an ejaculated drop of semen (*many*)? Then he became a clot of blood, then He [Allah] Created [him] and made [him] perfect, and of him He made two sexes, male and female. Has He no power [then] to give life to the dead?" (Qur'an 75:36-40)

There is a difference of opinion between classical scholars in regards to whether semen is impure or not. The Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools consider it impure and require it to be cleansed from one's body and clothes. Conversely, the Shāfi'ī School and also the Ḥanbalī School [according to the more authentic position related from Imam Aḥmad] consider semen to be pure. However, all the Schools agree that the emission of semen necessitates a ritual bath (*ghusl*) for both the man and the woman.

(*Ṭaḥṭāwī ʿalā Marāqī al-Falāḥ* P: 96 and *Radd al-Muhtār* 1:312-314 for the Ḥanafī School, *Al-Majmūʿ Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* 1:395-396 for the Shāfiʿī School, *Al-Mughnī* 1:197 & 1:735 for the Ḥanbalī School, and *Ḥāshiya al-Dasuqī ʿalā 'l-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* 1:92 for the Mālikī School)

3) Urinating

It is recommended from a medical point of view to urinate after having sex. This allows the remaining drops of semen to come out of one's system. One should avoid using exceedingly cold water when washing the private parts, since this can be harmful. (See: *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn* with its commentary *Itḥāf al-Sādāt al-Muttaqīn* 6:184, and *Adab-e-Mubashrat* P: 28)

4) Ritual Bath (*ghusl*)

a) It was mentioned earlier that all four Sunni Schools of Islamic law agree that the emission of semen (*many*) with sexual desire from a man, and ejaculatory fluid upon orgasm from a woman necessitates a ritual bath (*ghusl*). As such, after having sex, one is in a state of major ritual impurity (*janāba*) and is termed a *junub*. A *Junub* is prevented from praying, reciting or touching the Qur'ān, entering a Mosque, and other forms of worship until one purifies oneself. Allah Most High says:

وَإِن كُنتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُواْ

"...If you are in a state of major impurity (*janāba*), cleanse yourself well [by taking a bath]." (Qur'ān 5:6)

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

تحت كل شعرة جنابة ، فاغسلوا الشعر وأنقوا البشر

"Beneath every hair is an impurity (*janāba*), hence wash the hair [of the body] and clean the skin. (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 106 & *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* 252)

Apart from the emission of semen, major ritual impurity also comes about through penetration, with or without ejaculation, necessitating a ritual bath. Once the head of the penis enters the vagina, a ritual bath is necessary. In other words, emission of semen and sex are both independent causes of major ritual impurity and both necessitate the ritual bath. If semen is discharged without sex, but with sexual desire, or sexual intercourse takes place without ejaculation, a ritual bath is necessary in both situations.

In terms of sex without ejaculation being a cause of *Janāba*, the following Prophetic narrations are reported:

Sayyiduna Abū Hurayra ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا جلس بين شعبها الأربع ثم جهدها فقد وجب عليه الغسل . وفي حديث مطر: وإن لم ينزل

"When a man sits amidst four parts [of the woman] and then exerts pressure on her, a ritual bath becomes obligatory upon him." And in the ḥadīth reported by the narrator Maṭar, there is a further addition, "Even if he does not ejaculate." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 287 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 348, the wording is of *Muslim*)

Sayyida ʿĀ'isha ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا جاوز الختان الختان وجب الغسل

"When the [man's] organ goes beyond the [woman's] organ, a ritual bath becomes necessary." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 109 and *Musnad Aḥmad*)

Amr ibn Shuʿayb relates from his father, from his grandfather ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إذا التقى الختانان وتوارت الحشفة فقد وجب الغسل

"When the two organs [of the man and woman] meet, and the top part of the penis is hidden, a ritual bath becomes necessary." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 611 and *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shayba* 1:112)

Imam Nawawī states in his commentary of the [first] ḥadīth recorded by Muslim: "The meaning of the ḥadīth is that the necessity to bathe is not restricted to the ejaculation of semen, but rather, when the head of the penis becomes hidden into the vagina, a ritual bath is necessary on the man and woman. There is no difference of opinion on this today. Some of the Companions and those after them disagreed, but then a consensus (*ijmāʿ*) was reached on what we just stated." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* P: 400)

In regards to the emission of semen without sex being a cause of *Janāba*, the following Prophetic narration is reported:

Sayyiduna ʿAlī ﷺ relates:

سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الْمَذْيِ فَقَالَ: مِنَ الْمَذْيِ الْوُضُوءُ وَمِنَ الْمَنِيِّ الْغُسْلُ.

"I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ [through someone else] regarding pre-ejaculatory fluid (*madhy*), so he said, "Upon the emission of pre-ejaculatory fluid, a ritual ablution is obliged, and upon the emission of semen (*many*), a ritual bath is obliged."" (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 114, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 504 & others)

If a woman ejaculates, even during sleep, by having an orgasm or achieving sexual climax, she too is required to have a ritual bath. In this regard, the following Prophetic narration is reported:

Umm Salama, the mother of the believers ﷺ, relates:

جَاءَتْ أُمُّ سُلَيْمٍ امْرَأَةُ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ هَلْ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ مِنْ غُسْلٍ إِذَا هِيَ احْتَلَمَتْ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَعَمْ إِذَا رَأَتِ الْمَاءَ.

"Umm Sulaym, the wife of Abū Talha, came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "O Messenger of Allah, surely, Allah is not shy from the truth. Is it necessary for a woman to take a ritual bath after she has a wet dream?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, "Yes, if she notices a discharge."" (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 278)

Imam Ibn Qudāma states, "The emission of semen with force and desire necessitates a ritual bath for men and women [i.e. orgasm], whether awake or asleep. This is the position of the generality of the jurists, as Tirmidhī said, and we are not aware of any disagreement on this." (*Al-Mughnī* 1:197)

Thus, both spouses must ensure that they take an obligatory ritual bath after having sex, even if there is no ejaculation. If either of them achieves sexual climax and ejaculates, whether during foreplay or sleep, they must also take a ritual bath. When taking a bath, care must be taken that one's whole body is washed properly, ensuring that water reaches parts of the body that are not washed easily. If the couple is unaware of how to take a ritual bath properly, they must learn the Islamic guidelines in this regard.

b) As regards to semen coming out from the man after he has taken a ritual bath, according to the stronger position within the Hanafi school

and the position of other schools, sexual gratification (*shahwa*) and forceful emission (*dafq*) of semen at the time of it exiting the private parts are not conditions for the obligation of a ritual bath, provided the initial cause was sexual climax, and not due to lifting a heavy object etc. The condition of the initial cause being sexual climax is specific to the Ḥanafī school.

According to the Shāfi'ī school, whenever semen exits, a ritual bath is obligatory, regardless of the initial cause. Given this, the discharge of semen remaining in the passageway after completing a ritual bath, requires another bath.

However, according to the Ḥanafī school, if semen is discharged after urinating, sleeping or excessive walking, it is not necessary to repeat the bath, as these movements are considered to have cleaned the passageway and halted the dripping of all semen. As such, any semen discharged after this is not attributed to the initial gratification and is considered to have exited without sexual climax. However, a new ablution (*wuḍū'*) is necessary, since something has come out of the private parts. As for the prayers, they are valid because they were performed in a state of purity, given that the bath was invalidated after the prayer.

If a woman sees fluid exiting from her after taking a ritual bath, then if she is confident that these are her own fluids, and not those of the man, the ruling mentioned above applies. If, however, she is in doubt, she does not need to repeat her bath or any prayers that she may have performed. This is the position of the Ḥanafī school.

According to the Shāfi'ī school, if she achieved orgasm during sex with her husband, it is obligatory for her to repeat her bath. This is because her "achieving an orgasm" is a strong indication that it is her own sexual fluid, and so it is necessary for her to repeat the bath. However, if she did not achieve an orgasm, she does not need to repeat her bath, but it does invalidate her ablution, because what is exiting from her is her husband's semen and not her own fluid. (See: *Al-Hidāya* 1:31, *Radd al-Muḥtār* 1:159-161 and *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* 1:117-118)

In light of all of this, it is best for both spouses to make a habit of urinating before taking the obligatory ritual bath. This will help avoid problems later on, *In shā' Allāh*.

5) Sleeping in a State of Major Ritual Impurity (*janāba*)

a) It is recommended for the couple to hasten in having a ritual bath after sexual relations. One should endeavour to end one's state of *Janāba* as soon as possible, as it releases one from the restrictions of ritual impurity.

Sayyiduna 'Ali ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لا تَدْخُلُ الْمَلائِكَةُ بَيْتًا فِيهِ صُورَةٌ وَلا كَلْبٌ وَلا جُنُبٌ

"The angels do not enter a house in which there is a picture, a dog, or a person in a state of major ritual impurity [a *junub*]." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 229)

This hadith is referring to an individual who unnecessarily remains in a state of major ritual impurity for a considerable length of time to the extent that the obligatory (*fard*) prayers are delayed. In such a case, one is sinful; otherwise it is not obligatory to have a bath directly after sexual relations. It is permitted, without dislike, to go to sleep in a state of *janaba*, even though having a bath is superior.

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ relates:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَنَامُ وَهُوَ جُنُبٌ وَلا يَمَسُّ مَاءً

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would sleep while he was in a state of major ritual impurity without touching water." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 118, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 230 and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 581)

The author of the commentary of *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhī*, states: "In this hadith, there is proof that it is permitted for a *junub* to go to sleep before having a bath and before performing an ablution." (*Tuhfat al-Ahwadhī bi Sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhī* 1:397)

Ghudayf ibn al-Hārith relates:

قُلْتُ لِعَائِشَةَ: أَرَأَيْتِ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَغْتَسِلُ مِنَ الْجَنَابَةِ فِي أَوَّلِ اللَّيْلِ أَوْ فِي آخِرِهِ؟ قَالَتْ: رُبَّمَا اغْتَسَلَ فِي أَوَّلِ اللَّيْلِ وَرُبَّمَا اغْتَسَلَ فِي آخِرِهِ، قُلْتُ: اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي الأَمْرِ سَعَةً

"I asked 'Ā'isha, "Have you seen the Messenger of Allah ﷺ having a bath of *janaba* at the beginning of the night or at the end?" She replied, "Sometimes he would have a bath at the beginning of the night and sometimes at the end." And so I said, "Allah is Most Great. All Praise be to Allah Who put ease in the matter..." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 228 and others)

Imam Nawawī states, "The conclusion of these hadīths is that it is permitted for a *junub* to eat, drink, sleep and have sex before having a bath. This is something that is agreed upon by all the scholars (...) The meaning [of the hadīth in which it is mentioned that the Messenger of Allah would sleep without touching water] is that on a few occasions, he would not touch water at all in order to indicate permissibility [of going to sleep in such a state]. Had the Messenger of Allah ﷺ continuously used water, it would have been presumed that using water is necessary, and Allah knows best." (*Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* P: 372-373)

b) If one wishes to sleep without having a bath, one is encouraged to perform a ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*).

Sayyida 'Ā'isha ؓ relates:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنَامَ وَهُوَ جُنُبٌ غَسَلَ فَرْجَهُ وَتَوَضَّأَ لِلصَّلَاةِ

"Whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ intended to sleep in a state of major ritual impurity, he would wash his private parts and perform ablution like that for the prayer." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 284 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 305, the wording is of *Bukhārī*)

Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "Can any one of us sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity?" He replied:

نَعَمْ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَرْقُدْ وَهُوَ جُنُبٌ

"Yes, if one performs ablution, one can sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 283, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 306 and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 120, the wording is of *Bukhārī*)

Sayyiduna 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ mentioned to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he becomes *junub* at night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him:

تَوَضَّأْ وَاغْسِلْ ذَكَرَكَ ثُمَّ نَمْ

"Perform ablution and wash your private parts, then go to sleep." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 286 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 306)

With the exception of the isolated position of a handful of scholars, such as Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī and Ibn al-Habīb al Mālikī, the general body of scholars (*jumhūr*) hold that performing ablution before going to

sleep is recommended, not obligatory. In other words, one would be rewarded for performing ablution but not sinful for omitting it.

This is supported by the narration recorded by Imam Ibn Khuzayma and Imam Ibn Ḥibbān in their respective *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Can any one of us sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity?" He replied:

يَنَامُ وَيَتَوَضَّأُ إِنْ شَاءَ

"Yes, he may sleep, and perform ablution if he so wishes."
(*Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma* 211)

Likewise, the ḥadīth of Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﷺ quoted earlier that "the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would sleep while in a state of major ritual impurity without touching water" is a proof that performing an ablution is not obligatory. Imam Nawawī states, "It is recommended to perform ablution and wash one's private parts before these matters [i.e. sleeping, eating, drinking and the like] [...] Our scholars have clearly stated that it is [somewhat] disliked to sleep, eat, drink and have sex before performing ablution, and these ḥadīths would indicate that. However, there is no difference of opinion according to us that this performing of ablution is not obligatory (*wājib*). This is the opinion of Imam Mālik and the majority of scholars..." (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim* P: 372)

c) If one is unable to perform a ritual ablution, one should at least clean and wash one's private parts, as mentioned in the ḥadīth of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ recorded by Imam Bukhārī . This is the last of the three stages. However, in this case also, there is no sin for not washing one's private parts, since it is reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ retired to bed "without touching water".

In conclusion, there are three stages here: The optimum is to perform the ritual bath and then sleep; if that is not possible, a ritual ablution should be performed; and if that is not possible, one should at least wash one's private parts. However, if none of the above three actions are performed, one will still not be guilty of committing a sin.

6) Successive Sessions of Sexual Intercourse

a) Islam permits the couple to have sex more than once in one given period of the day or night, provided no harm is feared. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya mentions in his *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* that one should only have sex when sexual desire is at its peak and the man has a full naturally gained erection which is not dependent on thinking about

something or looking at something. It is improper to try and force sexual desire (*shahwa*) upon oneself. (*Al-Tibb al-Nabawi* P: 181)

As such, if there is a genuine desire to re-engage in sexual relations, the couple may do so, otherwise it may be better for them to wait until they are fully revitalised. Both spouses should be extremely mindful and respectful of their partner's physical condition in this regard, lest one is forced into something one is not ready for.

b) There is complete agreement of the scholars that it is not necessary to have a ritual bath in between two successive sessions of sexual intercourse. The preferred habit of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was to have a separate bath each time, but he is also reported to have engaged in successive sessions of intercourse having one bath only at the end.

Sayyiduna Anas ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَطُوفُ عَلَى نِسَائِهِ بِغُسْلٍ وَاحِدٍ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to engage in sexual relations with his [various] wives with a single bath." (*Sahih Muslim* 309, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* 140, *Sunan Abu Dawud* 220 and others)

The meaning of this hadith is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would engage in sexual relations with more than one of his wives and then have one bath at the end. This is clear proof that having a bath in between two successive sessions of sexual intercourse, whether with the same wife or a different wife, is not necessary.

However, it is superior and recommended to have a separate bath for each sexual encounter. Sayyiduna Abu Rafi' ﷺ relates that:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ طَافَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ عَلَى نِسَائِهِ يَغْتَسِلُ عِنْدَ هَذِهِ وَعِنْدَ هَذِهِ ، قَالَ: قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، أَلَا تَجْعَلُهُ غُسْلًا وَاحِدًا؟ قَالَ: هَذَا أَزْكَى وَأَطْيَبُ وَأَطْهَرُ

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ engaged in sexual relations with his [various] wives one day, and had a [separate] bath by this one and that one. He (Abu Rafi') says, 'I said, "O Messenger of Allah, Why do you not just have one bath?" He replied, "This is cleaner and better and purer."' (*Sunan Abi Dawud* 221, *Sunan Ibn Majah* 590 and *Musnad Ahmad*, the wording is of *Abu Dawud*)

c) As far as performing a ritual ablution in between two successive sessions of sexual intercourse, this is strongly encouraged, but also not necessary.

Sayyiduna Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمْ أَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَعُودَ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ

> "When anyone amongst you has sex with his wife and then intends to re-engage, he should perform ablution [in between the two acts]." (*Sahīh Muslim* 308, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* 141 and *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* 222, the wording is of *Muslim*)

According to the general body of scholars (*jumhūr*) which includes the four schools, the command to perform ablution in this hadīth is a recommendation, not an obligation. The same hadīth is recorded in *Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma* with the following addition, "because it [performing ablution] gives him more energy for the second time." (*Sahīh Ibn Khuzayma* 221)

Moreover, Imam Tahāwī relates with his own chain of transmission to Sayyida 'A'isha ﷺ who says: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to have sexual relations, then re-engage without performing ablution [...]" (*Sharh Ma'ānī al-Āthār* 774)

d) If one is not able to perform ablution, one should at least wash one's private parts before having sex for the second time. Imam Nawawī mentions that if one intends to have sex with a different wife, then washing the private parts is greatly emphasised. (*Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahīh Muslim* P: 372)

7) Secrets of Sexual Relations

Allah Most High has made the husband and wife garments for one another, for He Most High says:

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

> "It is made lawful for you, in the nights of fasts, to have sex with your women. They are your garments and you are their garments..." (Qur'an 2:187)

It is known that if a garment is not long, complete or loose-fitting, and not free of holes and tears, it is not fit to cover one's nakedness. In a similar manner, the spouses are garments for one another, and if they fail to conceal each other's secrets, they will not be fulfilling

their duties. Marital relationships are based on trust and secrecy, and as such, each spouse is duty-bound to conceal matters that are revealed to them by their spouse under this trust.

Concealing secrets is more important when it comes to intimate issues. It is categorically forbidden (*ḥarām*) for the husband and wife to reveal their sexual secrets to others. It is a shameful and sinful practice that has been emphatically condemned by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Sayyiduna Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> إِنَّ مِنْ أَشَرِّ النَّاسِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْزِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الرَّجُلَ يُفْضِي إِلَى امْرَأَتِهِ وَتُفْضِي إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يَنْشُرُ سِرَّهَا
>
> "The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgment is the man who has sex with his wife and she has sex with him, then he reveals her secret." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1437)

The warning against revealing sexual secrets is not only for men, but rather it includes women too. It is unlawful to discuss with others what takes place in the bedroom. Sexual matters are private and must remain that way. Sharing them brings such thoughts to the minds of others, potentially leading to fornication of the heart. It is also a means of harming one's spouse, as he or she would not want details of their sexual behaviour revealed to others.

Sayyida Asma bint Yazīd ؓ relates:

> كنا عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الرجال و النساء فقال: عسى رجل يحدث بما يكون بينه و بين أهله أو عسى امرأة تحدث بما يكون بينها و بين زوجها ، فأرم القوم ، فقلت: أي و الله يا رسول الله ، انهم ليفعلون و انهن ليفعلن ، قال: فلا تفعلوا فإن مثل ذلك مثل شيطان لقي شيطانة في ظهر الطريق فغشيها و الناس ينظرون
>
> 'We, as men and women, were sitting in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "May a man be talking [with others] about what goes on between him and his wife, and may a woman be talking [with others] about what she

> does with her husband?" The people remained quiet and did not answer. So I said, "Yes, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah! The men do that, and the women do that too." He said, "Do not do that, because doing that is like a male devil (*shayṭān*) meeting a female devil (*shayṭāna*) in the middle of a road, and having sex with her whilst people are watching." (*Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* of Ṭabarānī 24:162-163. A similar report is recorded in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and *Musnad Aḥmad*)

A tendency exists in some people to relate graphic details of their sexual encounters to friends. Some men boast about their performance in bed and what their wives do with them, whilst some women enjoy boasting about their sexual relationship with their husbands. The above hadiths should suffice in deterring such people. They should realise that they are answerable to Allah Most High on the Day of Judgement, and must completely shun such shameless behaviour.

This prohibition of revealing intimate secrets pertains to normal situations. However, if there is a genuine need to discuss one's marital affairs, such as when seeking religious guidance or counselling, or when one is a victim of injustice and is complaining to those in authority, then the prohibition is suspended. However, in this case too, graphic details that do not need to be mentioned must not be disclosed. (See *Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Muslim*, commentary on hadith 1437)

- 10 -

SUMMARY OF RULINGS AND ETIQUETTES OF SEXUAL RELATIONS

AS AN OVERVIEW of the issues that have been discussed in this book, the following is a summary of acts that are Islamically recommended (*mustaḥabb*), disliked (*makrūh*) and prohibited (*ḥarām*):

RECOMMENDED ACTS

1) Engaging in sexual relations with correct intentions and objectives in mind.

2) Approaching sexual relations with moderation.

3) Engaging in sex in a state of relaxation and temperamental balance.

4) Preparing for sexual relations both psychologically and physically.

5) Ensuring cleanliness and personal hygiene.

6) The wife adorning herself for her husband.

7) The wife exhibiting feminine traits in front of her husband.

8) The husband exhibiting affection towards his wife and preceding sex with kind words.

9) Foreplay between the spouses before having sex.

10) Covering up copies of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature during sexual relations.

11) Reciting the various supplications.

12) The husband waiting for the wife to achieve sexual climax.

13) Being affectionate and considerate towards one's spouse after sex.

14) Cleanliness after sexual relations.

15) Having a ritual bath, or performing a ritual ablution, or at the least, washing one's private parts before sleeping, eating or re-engaging in sexual relations.

PROHIBITED AND DISLIKED ACTS

1) The wife refusing to make herself sexually available for her husband without a valid reason.

2) The husband depriving his wife of her right of sex without a valid reason.

3) Sex during menstruation and post-natal bleeding.

4) The husband intentionally drinking his wife's milk [according to the Ḥanafī School].

5) Using food during foreplay [disliked].

6) Using sex aids during foreplay [disliked, but in some cases prohibited].

7) Bondage and flogging.

8) Sexually provocative dancing accompanied by music.

9) Watching pornographic material for stimulation.

10) Cross-dressing.

11) Deriving sexual pleasure from urine and filth.

12) Public display of affection, and sex in front of others.

13) Couples taking intimate pictures of each other.

14) Fantasising about another person during sex.

15) Anal sex.

16) Oral sex [disliked when sexual fluids do not enter the mouth, and prohibited when it involves sexual fluids entering the mouth].

17) Self-masturbation via phone-sex with one's spouse.

18) Revealing secrets of sexual relations to others.

- 11 -

ETIQUETTES AND FIQH OF THE FIRST NIGHT OF MARRIAGE

THE FIRST NIGHT of marriage (*laylat al-zafāf*) is probably the most important night of a couple's marital life. Failing to observe correct moral ethics and etiquettes in this night can have a long-lasting negative impact on one's spouse, since the first impression is often a lasting impression.

Both spouses will be starting a completely new chapter in their lives, not knowing what the future holds for them. Naturally, they will be nervous, apprehensive and anxious. At the same time, they will be excited and eager to get to know one another and start their marital life with bliss. In an ideal situation, both will almost be strangers to each other, having had no intimate contact previously. As such, bashfulness and a feeling of strangeness is to be expected.

In such circumstances, it is extremely important for both the husband and wife to try their utmost to make matters easy for one another. They should treat each other with extreme gentleness, compassion and tenderness. The wife will naturally be more nervous, bashful and even fearful, hence the husband has added responsibilities to play his role of a husband on the first night. He should ensure that she feels at ease by creating a friendly and courteous atmosphere. He should be kind and extremely gentle with her by engaging in light-hearted conversation.

1) Greeting with *Salām* and Reciting the *Du'ā*

When the newly married couple enter the bedroom, after greeting one another with the traditional Islamic greeting "*Assalāmu 'Alaykum Wa Raḥmatullāh Wa Barakātuh*" (may the peace of Allah descend upon you and His Mercy and Blessings), the husband should place his hand on his wife's forelock (front part of the head) and recite the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَهَا وَخَيْرَ مَا جَبَلْتَهَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَ شَرِّ مَا جَبَلْتَهَا عَلَيْهِ

Transliteration:
Allāhumma innī as'aluka khayrahā wa khayra mā jabaltahā 'alayhi wa a'ūdhu bika min sharrihā wa sharri mā jabaltahā 'alayh.

Translation:
"O Allah! I ask from you the good of her and the good with which you have created her, and I seek refuge with you from the evil in her and the evil with which you have created her." (*Sunan Abī Dāwūd* 2153, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 1918 and others, the wording of the *Du'ā* is from *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*)

Although this supplication (*du'ā*) is addressed to the man, it implicitly includes the woman also. Any *Du'ā* which refers to women in a specific way can also be inverted to refer to men. As such, the wife may also recite the supplication when she sees her husband for the first time, but the wording will be slightly changed to accommodate the male gender, as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَهُ وَخَيْرَ مَا جَبَلْتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ وَ شَرِّ مَا جَبَلْتَهُ عَلَيْهِ

Transliteration:
Allāhumma innī as'aluka khayrahu wa khayra mā jabaltahu 'alayhi wa a'ūdhu bika min sharrihi wa sharri mā jabaltahu 'alayh.

Translation:
"O Allah! I ask from you the good of him and the good with which you have created him, and I seek refuge with you from the evil in him and the evil with which you have created him." (See: *Radiant Prayers* by Mufti Taqī Uthmānī P. 64)

The reason behind this supplication is that all human beings, with the exception of the Prophets (peace be upon them), are prone to the whisperings of the Devil and have a propensity for evil, and so the couple are encouraged to pray for the good in each other and seek protection from each other's evil. It certainly does not mean that one's spouse is evil, but rather, this supplication refers to the possibility of evil in one's spouse, be that the husband or wife.

2) Offering Prayers

Abū Wā'il relates that a man once came to Sayyiduna 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and said, "I married a woman, but I fear discord [between us]. He replied, "When you bring her to you, offer two Rak'āts of prayer [and in another variation he said, "When you enter upon her, ask her to offer two Rak'āts behind you] and then say, "O Allah! Bless my family for me, and bless me for my family. O Allah! Unite us with good, and separate us, if you do, with good." (Tabarānī in his *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr* 9:204, and 'Abd al-Razzāq in his *Al-Musannaf* 6:85)

In this way, the couple should first perform two *Rak'āts* of prayer, preferably in congregation, with combined intentions of night vigil prayer (*tahajjud*), thanks-giving prayer (*shukr*) and prayer of need (*hāja*). If the couple is in need of renewing their ablution, they must first perform the ritual ablution. After the prayer, they should praise Allah Most High and send blessings on His Messenger ﷺ, and thank Allah for blessing them with this great gift of marriage. They should ask Allah to bless their union with goodness, prosperity, mutual love and the birth of pious offspring. Remember, the best of supplications are those that are made from the heart, out of neediness, with recognition of one's standing as a slave of Allah.

3) Light-hearted Discussion

After praying and making *Du'ā*, the couple should try to get to know each other more closely and assess each other's feelings by initiating a light-hearted discussion. It is recommended that they first engage themselves in some religious talk such as discussing the aims and objectives of marriage in Islam. They should make a firm resolution of living their lives in accordance with Islamic teachings and always to obey Allah Most High and His beloved Messenger ﷺ. They may even read some Islamic literature together, if they so wish. The husband should regard this moment as an opportunity to show his consideration for his wife's tender feelings, and treat her with love, affection and warmth. The wife, in turn, should not play "hard-to-get" but respond to his tenderness with love and compassion of her own.

4) Sexual Relations

It is important to note that engaging in sexual relations on the first night is not necessary. The husband should not hasten in taking his wife's virginity, but rather he should approach the matter with extreme calmness, even if it takes a few days. The newly married couple have all their lives before them for sexual relations, and there is no need to make haste in this regard. Much of the time during the first night

should be spent in getting to know one another, sharing each other's outlook on life and how their marital life should be lived in accordance with Islamic teachings. They may, however, begin to be intimate with one another, if they feel comfortable.

If intimacy does lead to sexual relations and actual sex, then the husband needs to be extremely gentle during penetration. A virgin undergoes considerable anxiety and pain during sex, and the husband must keep this in mind. Scholars mention that a husband's inability to penetrate on the first night is not a sign of his weakness or sexual impotency, since it is natural for men to be bashful or anxious on the first night, affecting their sexual potency. The couple may try on another occasion, and it may even take a few days. Both spouses will need to approach this delicate issue with forbearance and tolerance, helping one another in making matters as easy as possible. (*Uṣūl al-Mu'āshara al-Zawjiyya* P: 69)

Likewise, the husband should not expect his wife to respond fully to his sexual advances on the first night. A woman is more bashful than a man and will naturally be reserved in her response. The husband should take one step at a time, and the wife should respond to him in each step that he takes, eventually leading to full sexual relations. (Ibid)

5) Evil Suspicions

One extremely important point of caution for the husband is never to doubt his wife or have evil suspicions if it appears that she is not a virgin. Baseless suspicions and evil thoughts about others are categorically forbidden in Islam and a major sin. Allah Most High Says:

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

"O you who believe! Abstain from much suspicion. Some suspicions are sins..." (Qur'ān: 49:12)

A woman's hymen, the fold of tissue that partly covers the entrance to the vagina of a virgin, can be broken in many ways, including heavy menstrual flow, prolonged illness, falling, jumping excessively, horse-riding, cycling and certain sporting activities. In fact, in the Ḥanafī School, a woman is considered an "effective virgin" if people consider her a virgin, even though she may have had sex in the past without this being presently known about her. This is because virginity is something of great social weight in Islamic society, and to stain her honour for a

past sin, from which the woman has presumably repented. would be wrong. (*Radd al-Muḥtār*)

If the first night is spent in accordance with the above guidelines, it will serve as a perfect start to a blissful and happy life of marriage. *In shā' Allah.*

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CONCLUSION

IN THE PRECEDING pages, an attempt was made to shed light on issues concerning the sexual relationship of a husband and wife in light of the Qur'ān, Prophetic statements and texts of both classical and contemporary scholars. It has not been easy to discuss such a delicate topic in an open and frank manner, given the nature of the topic and given the natural bashfulness of a human being.

However, upon seeing many of our classical and contemporary scholars not only discussing these issues but explaining the finer details of it too, I embarked on this journey keeping in mind the statement of Allah Most High, "Surely, Allah is not shy of [expounding] the truth" and keeping in mind the statement of the Tābi'ī, Mujāhid, "Sacred knowledge is not gained by a shy or an arrogant person". I felt it was of paramount importance that Muslims seek Islamic knowledge relating to all areas of their lives, and that they do not shy away from certain aspects of it because of cultural taboos or constraints.

I hope I have gone some way towards achieving what I had set out to do. I pray this work is a source of much benefit for married couples, *In shā' Allāh*. I ask Allah Most High to make it purely for His sake, and that He forgive me for any mistakes that may have been committed, *Āmīn Yā Rabb al-'Ālamīn*.

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Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari is a traditionally trained scholar who studied in different parts of the world. Born in Leicester, UK and raised under the guidance of his illustrious father, Shaykh Mawlana Adam, he started learning about Islam from a very young age and memorized the Qur'an at the age of nine. He initially studied the Arabic Language and various other traditional Islamic Sciences at Darul Uloom Bury, UK, under many Shaykhs notably, Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf Motala, and received authorizations (*ijazas*) in various books including the six major books of hadith.

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His other works include: *The Issue of Shares, Simplified Rules of Zakat* and *Birth Control & Abortion in Islam*. He has also published Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi's *Wujub i'fa' al-lihya* (*The obligation of growing a beard*) and Shaykh Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri's *Mabahith fi aqa'id Ahl al-Sunna* (*Discussions on the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunna*), both with critical analysis and footnotes in Arabic. He is also widely known for his detailed and well-researched *fiqh* related articles on Darul Iftaa (www.daruliftaa.com) and Sunnipath (www.sunnipath.com) websites. He presently resides in Leicester, UK, where he is a teacher of various traditional Islamic sciences at Jamiah Uloom al-Qur'an and helps people with their queries and problems at the Institute of Islamic Jurisprudence (Darul Iftaa).

ISLAMIC GUIDE TO SEXUAL RELATIONS

MUHAMMAD IBN ADAM AL-KAWTHARI

FULFILMENT OF SEXUAL DESIRE and needs is essential in sustaining a harmonious marital relationship. However, in today's society, sexual boundaries are being pushed further and further, and often, sexual deviance is openly practised. In such circumstances, there is a need to identify which sexual activities are permissible in Shari'ah.

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